

Prevention of Seasonal Influenza

October 2024

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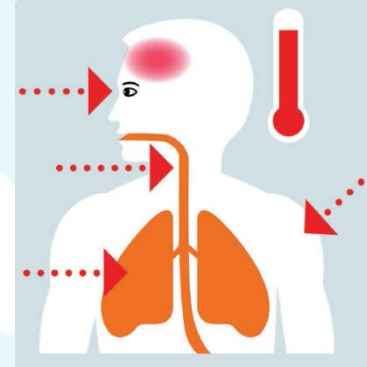
Seasonal influenza

- Seasonal influenza is an acute illness of the respiratory tract caused by influenza viruses
- It is usually more common in periods from January to March/April and from July to August in Hong Kong
- Three types of seasonal influenza viruses are recognised to cause human infection, namely A, B and C

Seasonal influenza

- Antigenic drifts (minor changes) of seasonal influenza viruses will lead to emergence of new strains
- New strains appear from time to time and at irregular intervals. This explains why the World Health Organization will make recommendations on the formulation of influenza vaccine every year

Clinical features



- Fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle and joint pain, fatigue and headache; some may also have vomiting and diarrhoea
- For healthy individuals, seasonal influenza is usually self-limiting with recovery in a few days to less than two weeks
- Seasonal influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals, such as the elderly, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, and people with underlying medical conditions. Flu-related complications include pneumonia, sepsis, encephalitis, myocarditis or even **death**

Mode of transmission

- Mainly spread through droplets when infected people cough, sneeze or talk
- May also spread by direct contact with the secretions of infected persons



Incubation period

- Around 1 – 4 days

Management



- Most people will recover from influenza on their own. Individuals should seek medical attention if symptoms persist or deteriorate
- People with mild symptoms should take adequate rest, drink plenty of water, and refrain from work or attending class at school when having symptoms of influenza
- Antibiotics which target bacterial infection but not viral infection **will not cure** influenza or make recovery faster
- Antiviral agents may reduce severity and duration of illness
 - Must be used **under doctor's prescription**

Prevention

- Seasonal influenza vaccination
- Personal hygiene
- Environmental hygiene

預防季節性流行性感冒
Prevention of Seasonal Influenza

每年接種季節性流感疫苗可有效地預防流感及其併發症
Annual seasonal influenza vaccination is effective in prevention of influenza and its complication

流感病毒與2019冠狀病毒亦可能於冬季流感季節同時傳播。當面對抗病毒，保障健康並減輕對醫療系統構成壓力。
Influenza viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 may both spread in the winter influenza season. Let's fight the viruses to protect health and to prevent the healthcare system from being overwhelmed.

打噴嚏或咳嗽時應掩蓋口鼻
Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing

保持雙手清潔
Keep hands clean

保持室內空氣流通
Maintain good indoor ventilation

如有呼吸道感染病徵，應佩戴外科口罩
Wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms

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衛生防護中心
Department of Health

Seasonal influenza vaccination



- The vaccine is safe and effective in preventing seasonal influenza and its complications
- Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that seasonal influenza vaccines are safe and effective, **all persons aged 6 months or above** except those with known contraindications are recommended to receive influenza vaccine for personal protection
- Usually, it is suggested that vaccination should be received **in autumn every year**. About 2 weeks after vaccination, the body will develop a sufficient level of antibodies to protect against influenza virus infection

Personal hygiene

- The wearing of mask is advised for the following situations -
 - any persons with fever or respiratory symptoms
 - any persons who are visiting or working in high risk places such as residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities, and clinical areas of healthcare facilities; and
 - high risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised) who are going to crowded places such as public transport
 - When an increasing trend in activity of respiratory viruses is expected, high risk persons are recommended to wear a surgical mask when visiting public places, while the public should also wear a surgical mask when taking public transportations or staying at crowded places
- It is important to wear a mask properly, including hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask. For details on proper mask wearing, please visit CHP website at www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/use_mask_properly.pdf



Personal hygiene

- Perform hand hygiene frequently. Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with either a clean cotton towel or a paper towel, especially:
 - Before and after touching the mouth, nose or eyes
 - After touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs
 - When hands are contaminated by respiratory secretion after coughing or sneezing
- If **hand washing facilities are not available**, or when **hands are not visibly soiled**, hand hygiene with 70 to 80% alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative



Personal hygiene

- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when coughing or sneezing
- Do not spit or litter
- Use tissue paper to hold your spit. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, and then wash hands thoroughly



Personal hygiene



- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly
- Build up good body immunity by having a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest, reducing stress, do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption

Environmental hygiene

- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as furniture, toys and commonly shared items with 1:99 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 99 parts of water), leave for 15 to 30 minutes, and then rinse with water and keep dry. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol

Environmental hygiene

- Use absorbent disposable towels to wipe away obvious contaminants such as respiratory secretions, and then disinfect the surface and neighbouring areas with 1:49 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 49 parts of water), leave for 15 to 30 minutes and then rinse with water and keep dry. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol
- Maintain good indoor ventilation. Avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks while in such places

For more information about Seasonal Influenza

- Please visit the Centre for Health Protection website

<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/14843.html>

Thank you