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Stay Strong & Fight Against Flu



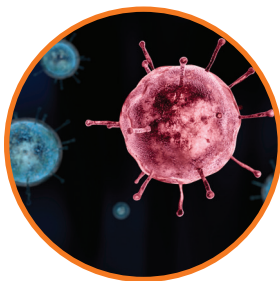
**養和家庭醫學及
基層醫療中心**

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What is Flu?

Seasonal influenza is an acute illness of the respiratory tract caused by various types of influenza viruses. In Hong Kong, it usually occurs in January to March/April and in July to August. The most commonly circulating influenza viruses are influenza B, H1N1, and H3N2, which are subtypes of the influenza A virus.



Transmission

Influenza viruses mainly spread through droplets when infected individuals cough, sneeze, or talk. It may also spread by direct contact with the secretions of infected persons. The incubation period is usually around one to four days. Infected persons may pass the viruses to other people one day before and up to five to seven days after symptoms occur. For young children or people with weak immune systems, the incubation duration may be longer.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle pain, fatigue and headache; some patients may also experience vomiting and diarrhoea. While one may often have severe and prolonged cough, fever and other symptoms generally resolve in five to seven days. To the weak, frail or elderly, influenza could be a serious illness, causing complications such as bronchitis, chest infection, or even death.

Treatment

Patients may be prescribed medications for symptom relief. Antiviral agents may reduce severity and duration of illness but must be prescribed by a doctor. It is also important to take adequate rest and drink plenty of water.

Prevention (1):

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination

Seasonal influenza vaccination can prevent seasonal influenza and its complications. Except for those with known contraindications, all people aged 6 months or above should receive seasonal influenza vaccinations.

When should I receive seasonal influenza vaccination?

The vaccine composition is updated annually in accordance with the circulating seasonal influenza strains. Therefore you should receive vaccination every year. It takes two weeks for the antibodies to develop and become effective after vaccination.

Who should receive seasonal influenza vaccination?

- Pregnant women
- Residents of Residential Care Homes
- Aged 50 or above
- Individuals with chronic diseases*
- Medical personnel
- Children aged from 6 months to 11 (below 12)
- Poultry workers
- Pig farmers and pig-slaughtering industry personnel

*People with chronic medical problems mainly refer to those who are suffering from chronic cardiovascular (except hypertension without complication), lung, metabolic or kidney diseases, obesity (BMI 30 or above); people who are immunocompromised, e.g. with a weakened immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment); children and adolescents (aged 6 months to 18 years) who are on long-term aspirin therapy; those with chronic neurological conditions that can compromise respiratory function or respiratory secretions, thereby increasing the risk for aspiration; or those who lack self-care ability.



Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (IIV) vs Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV)

There are two types of vaccines with different indications, i.e. inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) and live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV). The former contains dead virus and is given by injection; the latter is made of weaken viruses and administered as a nose spray.



Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (IIV)	Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV)
Suitable: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 months or above, including those who are healthy, pregnant or with chronic medical problems	Suitable: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age 2 to 49, non-pregnant and non-immunocompromised
Not Suitable or Later: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With a history of severe allergy to any vaccine component or after seasonal influenza vaccination• With fever• With egg allergy, bleeding disorders, or being on anticoagulants*	Not Suitable or Later: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With a history of severe allergic reaction to any vaccine component or after seasonal influenza vaccination• Children and adolescents on aspirin or salicylate-containing therapy• Children aged from 2 to 4 and diagnosed with asthma; or had wheezing or asthma in the past 12 months• Children and adults who are immunocompromised by any cause• Severely immunosuppressed• Pregnancy• Use of influenza antiviral medication within the past 48 hours• With egg allergy*
Side Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site◇ Fever◇ Muscle pain◇ Fatigue• Rare<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Hives◇ Swelling of lips and tongue◇ Breathing difficulty◇ Guillain-Barré Syndrome	Side Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Nasal congestion◇ Running nose◇ Fever◇ Sore throat



* Please consult your doctor for details.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How long does the vaccine take to become effective?

It becomes effective 3 weeks after vaccination.

2. When should children be vaccinated? How many doses are required?

Children can receive vaccination at the age of 6 months. Two doses are required if one begins vaccination below 9 years of age. The second dose should be given 28 days after the first one.



3. Who can receive flu vaccine?

According to the recommendations of the Department of Health, all people should receive vaccination before the summer flu season begins, especially children, the elderly, women who are planning pregnancy or already pregnant, and high risk personnel, such as medical staff.

Vaccination can also prevent related complications.

4. What are the common side effects?

Clinically speaking, the most common side effects are headache, fever, muscle sore, swelling or redness at the injection site.

5. Can I receive vaccination if I am allergic to certain food or drugs?

The vaccine contains proteins. If you are allergic to proteins, please consult your doctor before vaccination.

Prevention (2): Keep Good Personal and Environmental Hygiene

- Keep hands clean at all times

- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing. Dispose of used tissue into a lidded rubbish bin and wash hands thoroughly afterwards



- If you have respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask and seek medical advice immediately
- Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected regularly with 1:99 diluted household bleach
- Use absorbent disposable towels to remove obvious contaminants, such as respiratory secretions. The soiled surface and its surrounding areas should also be disinfected with 1:99 diluted household bleach, then rinse and dry it after 15 to 30 minutes
- Disinfect metallic surfaces with 70% alcohol
- Maintain good air circulation