

What is Flu/Seasonal Influenza?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs commonly known as flu.

Seasonal influenza/flu is usually a mild respiratory disease and self limiting. Uncomplicated influenza illness typically resolves after 3—7 days for the majority of persons, although cough and malaise can persist for >2 weeks. However, in high risk group a very few people, influenza virus infections can cause primary influenza viral pneumonia; exacerbate underlying medical conditions, lead to secondary bacterial pneumonia, sinusitis, or otitis media; or contribute to coinfections with other viral or bacterial pathogens and may need hospitalization.

There are 3 types of seasonal influenza viruses – A, B and C. Among many subtypes of influenza A viruses, influenza A (H1N1pdm09) and A (H3N2) subtypes are currently circulating among humans and known as seasonal influenza virus.

The influenza season in Bangladesh starts from April and last up to September with the peak in July and August.

What is Influenza A H1N1pdm09 or “swine flu”?

H1N1pdm09 is an influenza virus. When it was first detected in 2009, it was called “swine flu”. The H1N1pdm09 virus is now a regular human flu virus (seasonal) and continues to circulate seasonally worldwide.

Incubation period

- The typical incubation period for influenza is **1-4 days** (average: **2 days**). Adults can be infectious from **1 day** before onset of symptoms to 5-7 days after illness onset. Young children, older people and immunocompromised patients are at high risk of developing severe disease and shed the virus for longer period of time.

Transmission

- Seasonal human influenza viruses are transmitted primarily through respiratory droplet (e.g., when an infected person coughs or sneezes near a susceptible person).
- Transmission via droplets requires close contact between source and susceptible host, because droplets do not remain suspended in the air and generally travel only a short distance (<1 meter) through the air.

Symptoms

- People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:
 - A fever or feeling feverish/chills
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headaches
 - Fatigue (feeling very tired)
 - Children may develop:
 - Nausea
 - Loose stools (diarrhea)

People who are at risk for complications from influenza

- People with asthma
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic diseases (heart diseases, kidney diseases etc.)
- Adults \geq 65 years of age
- Pregnant women
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- People living with HIV or AIDS
- Patients with cancer
- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years of age

Treatment

- Supportive and symptomatic treatment
- In severe cases antiviral Oseltamivir can be used.

What should we do?

- Practice cough etiquette.
- Wash hands with soap and running water frequently
- Advice vaccination for high risk group such as
 - pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy,
 - children aged 6 months to 5 years,
 - elderly individuals (≥ 65 years of age),
 - individuals with chronic medical conditions,
 - Health-care workers.

Contact address for emergency

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