

Influenza

Clinical Description:

Influenza is a respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses. Influenza viruses cause an infection of the upper airway and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches and headaches. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

Incubation Period:

The incubation period is usually 1 - 3 days.

Mode of Transmission:

Influenza viruses are spread mainly by droplets when people with flu cough or sneeze. Influenza viruses are released into the air and can be inhaled by others. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something contaminated with influenza virus and then touching their mouth or nose.

Period of Communicability:

A person can spread the influenza one day before symptoms develop until seven days after symptoms appear.

Exclusion/Reporting:

Exclusion of the student or staff member should be based on their condition and if there is a school policy that warrants exclusion for symptoms of influenza. There is no state law that mandates school exclusion. During an influenza pandemic the school superintendent and health officials may need to update the exclusion policy and reporting criteria. For information on laws and rules see the ISDH Communicable Disease Reporting Rule (410 IAC 1-2.3) at [http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/comm_dis_rule\(1\).pdf](http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/comm_dis_rule(1).pdf).

Prevention/Care:

- The best protection is an annual flu vaccination before flu season starts. Each year the vaccine contains the types of flu virus predicted to cause illness in the coming year. Therefore, it is important to be vaccinated each year. The vaccine takes 14 days for the full protective effect to occur.
- Cover: Teach students and staff to cough or sneeze into one's elbow or upper sleeve or use a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Immediately discard the used tissue in the wastebasket.
- Clean: Encourage frequent hand washing, particularly after coughing or sneezing. An alcohol-based hand cleaner will also work if water is not available.
- Contain: Encourage ill students and staff members not to attend school.

Outbreaks:

According to the ISDH Communicable Disease Reporting Rule (410 IAC 1-2.3), an outbreak is defined as the number of cases of disease occurring in a community, region, or particular population that exceeds what is normally expected. A baseline absenteeism rate should be established by the school. If the absenteeism rate of those exhibiting influenza like symptoms is found to be in excess of what is normally expected, the outbreak shall be reported to the health department. Additionally, unusual occurrences of any disease are to be reported

immediately to the health department. An unusual occurrence of influenza could be an unusual presentation or the detection of influenza outside of normal influenza season. Typical influenza season occurs October through May. For additional information and recommendations regarding the preparation for, and the management of an outbreak situation in a school setting, see Appendix A, "Managing an Infectious Disease Outbreak In a School Setting."

Other Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm>

Indiana State Department of Health Quick Facts Page (found on disease/condition page):

<http://bit.ly/12lJLfD>

Indiana State Department of Health Influenza Website:

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/25462.htm>