

INFLUENZA

Influenza is a viral illness that affects both children and adults alike. This illness mostly occurs in the winter months. Influenza usually affects many people at once. Many people complain that the illness strikes suddenly. Usually the illness lasts for 5-7 days. Respiratory secretions from coughing and sneezing can spread the illness. The incubation period is usually 2-3 days.

Signs & Symptoms

- Fever/ Chills
- Cough
- Muscle Aches
- Headache
- Runny Nose

Complications

People with underlying illnesses, such as diabetes or asthma, have an increased risk for secondary infections due to the influenza virus. Another complication associated with influenza in children is an inflammation of the calf muscles in both legs. A very rare complication is called Reye's Syndrome, avoid the use of aspirin in children. If any stiff neck should occur with similar symptoms to influenza, your child should be seen to rule out the possibility of meningitis.

Treatment

The treatment consists of rest, fluids, and control of pain and fever. If any secondary infections are associated with influenza an antibiotic may be prescribed. An antibiotic will not change or shorten the course of the influenza virus. There are a few antiviral medications available today, however, many of them are not proven to be effective or safe in children.

Prevention

The "Flu Vaccine" is recommended for children that are 6 months of age - 5 years of age and at high risk for complications from influenza. All children who have asthma, diabetes, congenital heart disease, cystic fibrosis, and chronic neurological diseases should receive the influenza vaccine.