



Prevention of Seasonal Influenza - Advice for Parents

2018.1.25

Influenza, also known as flu, is an acute, highly contagious respiratory disease. It is caused by various types of influenza viral strains. Three types of influenza viruses are recognized as capable of affecting humans: type A, B and C, among which type A is more common. Emergence of new subtypes (antigenic variation) occurs easily, which may cause influenza to spread widely and even cause outbreaks. In Macao, influenza A (H1N1 and H3N2) and influenza B are most commonly seen, and the peak season normally falls on February to March.

Source of infection

Mainly the infected persons.

Mode of transmission

Transmitted through air or droplets; it may also spread through direct or indirect contact with the oral and nasal discharge of the infected person.

Incubation period and infectious period

Incubation period is short, usually 1-3 days.

An infected person remains infectious from 1 day before onset of symptoms to 7 days after illness onset.

Susceptible population

Generally susceptible. The infected will develop certain extent of immunity but there is no cross-immunity among the three types of influenza viruses; meanwhile, influenza viruses mutate from time to time, therefore recurrent infection is common.

Clinical features

Symptoms are relatively mild under general circumstances, which include fever, headache, muscle pain, runny nose, sore throat, cough, etc. Elderly people, infants, young children and persons with chronic disease are more likely to develop complications like bronchitis and pneumonia.

Treatment

Treatment is usually symptomatic / supportive. The use of appropriate anti-viral medication within 48 hours after illness onset is effective in shortening the duration of symptoms, reducing the risk of complications, as well as lowering hospitalization rates and mortality. Antibiotics are not effective in treating influenza unless complicated with bacterial infection. Most influenza cases can recover spontaneously in 2-7 days and acquire immunity therefrom.



Preventive measures

Vaccination

Influenza vaccine is prepared according to the prevailing strains in the region each year, as recommended by the World Health Organization. It takes about 2-3 weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. Effectiveness of the vaccine depends on the degree of similarity between the viruses used in the vaccine and those in circulation. As the effectiveness of influenza vaccine declines throughout the year, vaccination should be repeated every year.

Individuals aged 9 years or above require only 1 dose; children aged between 6 months and 9 years who have never received any influenza vaccine are recommended to receive 2 doses with a minimum interval of 1 month.

Personal hygiene

- Maintain good personal hygiene, perform hand hygiene frequently;
- Cover the mouth and nose with tissue paper when coughing or sneezing; hold the spit and secretion with tissue, put it into covered dustbins, and then wash hands at once. When tissue paper is not available, cover the mouth and nose with your elbow instead of your palms;
- Ensure all members of the household have adequate sleep, maintain a balanced diet and exercise frequently;
- Avoid visiting crowded places;
- Do not share towels with others;
- Wear a mask if developing influenza-like symptoms, taking care of patients, or visiting hospitals or clinics, wear a mask.

Environmental hygiene

- Maintain good indoor ventilation and environmental hygiene, keep windows open as much as possible;
- Keep washroom clean and ventilated, without unpleasant odor;
- Clean and disinfect toys, furniture, floor and frequently touched surfaces at least once daily.

Arrangements for infected children

- If children develop symptoms of illness including fever and cough, wear a mask and seek medical advice as soon as possible; if hospitalization is not required, keep staying at home whenever possible for adequate rest;
- The disease is characterized by specific development, clinical course and timeline. Parents are encouraged to pay close attention to the health condition of the infected children; should the condition deteriorate, seek medical advice promptly.



Coordination and management

- Pay attention to the epidemic information promulgated by the MSAR Government and coordinate with the preventive measures recommended;
- Keep updated with the latest information about disease prevention. For details of relevant information, visit the Health Bureau's website (<http://www.ssm.gov.mo/csr/>) or call the Infectious Disease Hotline at 28700800.

Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
Health Bureau

Differentiation between influenza and common cold

	Influenza	Common Cold
Pathogen	Influenza viruses (A, B and C)	Rhinovirus, coronavirus, parainfluenza virus, respiratory syncytial virus, adenovirus, etc.
Communicability	High	Generally not high
Onset	Sudden	Slow
Fever	High fever is usually present	Uncommon
Headache/ body aches	Common and severe	Uncommon and mild
Stuffy/ runny nose	Rare	Common
Sore throat	Common	Rare
Complications	Many	Very few
Duration	1 week	Normally 2-3 days
Condition	Severe	Generally not severe