



## Introduction

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. There are two main types or strains of influenza virus, types A and B. Influenza A and B viruses are responsible for seasonal flu epidemics each year. Flu season typically occurs in the fall and winter, with peaks of illness occurring anytime from late November through March.

## Mode of Transmission

Influenza (flu) viruses are primarily spread from person to person by “droplets.” This happens when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and deposited on the mouth, nose or eyes of people nearby. Influenza viruses may also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on an object and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands.

## Length of Infectiousness

Most healthy adults may be contagious 1 day before symptoms develop, and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick. Children, especially younger children, may pass the virus for longer. This means people may be able to spread flu to others before they know they’re sick, as well as while sick. Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others.

## Treatment

Treatment for flu primarily consists of supportive therapy such as rest, staying hydrated and using analgesics as directed. Some individuals may benefit from antiviral medications. When used for treatment, antivirals can lessen symptoms and shorten the time you are sick. Antivirals also can prevent serious flu-related complications (like pneumonia).

## Prevention

The best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated every year. There is also data to suggest that even if someone gets sick after vaccination, their illness may be milder. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get an annual flu vaccine.

## Immunity

In general, a person infected with a particular strain of influenza will have some immunity to closely related viruses; this immunity may persist for one or more years. The degree of protection depends on the health of the person involved. Influenza viruses are constantly changing, so immunity against one strain is less effective against new strains as viruses evolve over time.

## When to report to Clark County Public Health

Report influenza outbreaks in a school to CCPH by faxing the Influenza Reporting Form to the Communicable Disease Program at (564) 397-8080.

- CCPH defines an influenza outbreak in a school setting as  $\geq 10\%$  of child/staff population with similar symptoms consistent with influenza-like illness (ILI).

## Incubation Period

1-4 days (avg. 2)

## Symptoms:

Typically includes:

- Fever ( $\geq 101^\circ\text{F}$ )
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Dry cough
- Body aches
- Weakness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea  
(more common in children)

## Duration of Illness

3-7 days

## Diagnosis

The two main test types, both of which require swabbing of the nasopharynx, include:

1. **Rapid test:** can provide results in as little as 30 minutes.
2. **Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests:** are more accurate, and are sent to commercial or public health labs.



# Influenza Information for School Health Personnel

## We recommend schools have policies and procedures in place for:

- Tracking and managing staff, student and volunteer vaccination records.
- Excluding staff and students with ILI or confirmed influenza until after the fever is gone (normally for 24 hours).
- Implementing a parent notification system following an exposure.
- Tracking the number of student and staff absences due to similar symptoms or cause.

## What to do when you have influenza in your school:

- Consult with the CCPH Communicable Disease program who will work with your school to determine appropriate response and need for additional control measures based on CDC, Washington Department of Health and/or Health Officer recommendations. Control measures will be determined on a case-by-case basis in response to that particular outbreak.
- Exclude case(s) from school until 24 hours after fever has resolved.
- If a confirmed case attended school during their infectious period, distribute a notification letter and FAQ sheet to potentially exposed persons (e.g. classroom or whole school). Letter and FAQ templates are available at: <https://www.clark.wa.gov/public-health/schools-child-day-cares>.
  - If you have questions regarding appropriate audiences for distribution of letters and FAQ's, please call CCPH at 564.397-8182.
- Reinforce cough etiquette education and hand hygiene education to reduce the spread of illness in the school.
- Notify your facility licenser or certifier of an outbreak (if you have one).

## After cases or outbreaks occur:

- Evaluate your school's response.
- Develop action plans to address any identified areas of concern regarding school's readiness and response.
- Don't hesitate to use CCPH as a resource to review outbreak response or support training needs.