

PATIENT INFORMATION

Seasonal Influenza 'flu'

Patient Information for Areas Affected by 'flu'

At present Seasonal influenza ('flu') is circulating in the community and in the hospital.

Unfortunately a patient in a bed near to yours has been identified with flu. To reduce the risk of you catching the flu, the doctors can prescribe you a course of Tamiflu (Oseltamivir), this is an anti-viral medication that has been used extensively over several years.

The hospital Infection, Prevention and Control Team will be advising staff on controlling any 'flu, in the hospital, at all times.

Below are some commonly asked questions and answers. If you have other questions the ward nurse can ask a member of the Infection, Prevention and Control Team, on your behalf.

What is flu?

It is a respiratory illness associated with infection by the influenza virus. Symptoms include headache, fever, cough, sore throat and aching muscles and joints. It can affect different people in a variety of ways, ranging from minor symptoms through to pneumonia.

How long will someone with 'flu be infectious to others?

People are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms. They can continue to spread the virus, for example in coughs and sneezes, for up to five days (seven days in children). People are considered no longer infectious if their symptoms have settled, or if still symptomatic and it has been at least seven days from the onset of symptoms (10 days in children).

How can I catch it?

Transmission is by:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Touching or shaking the hand of an infected person and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose
- Touching surfaces or objects that have become contaminated with the flu virus and then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose without first washing your hands.

Coughing or sneezing into a disposable tissue reduces spread to others.

Regular washing of hands or use of disinfectant wipes or alcohol hand rub can reduce risks of getting 'flu.

Am I infectious if I don't have symptoms?

No. If you do not have symptoms of seasonal flu you are not infectious.

Why are ward staff wearing face masks?

Staff working on the ward may need to assess the infectious risk posed to them and, where appropriate will use gloves, aprons and sometimes face masks to minimize that risk.

Your health care worker may ask you to wear a face mask to minimize risk of transmission, when being moved to another ward or department.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

Working with you, for you