

Influenza Exposure

Definition

- Exposure (Close Contact) to a person with influenza
- Your child has NO symptoms of influenza (no fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose)

Health Information

Exposure (Close Contact) Definition

- **Household Close Contact.** Lives with a person with flu.
- **Other Close Contact.** Touching distance within 6 feet (2 meters) of person with flu. Close contact includes kissing, hugging or sharing eating and drinking utensils. It also includes close conversations. Direct contact with secretions of a person with flu is also close contact. Includes being in the same child care center room or carpool. The CDC defines 6 feet as how far coughing can spread the flu virus. How long the close contact lasts is also important.
- **Not Close Contact - In same building.** Walking by a person or sitting in a room briefly is not close contact. Being in the same school, church, workplace or building also is not close contact.
- **Not Close Contact - In same town.** Living in a town where there are people with flu is not close contact. Living in the same state or country (such as Mexico) carries no added risk.

Care Advice

1. **Influenza Close Contact Within the Last 7 Days but LOW-RISK Child:**
 - Although your child was exposed to flu, your child does not have any symptoms.
 - Symptoms usually develop within 1-4 days of seasonal flu contact. 7 days is an outer limit.
 - Even if your child gets the flu, your child most likely will do fine. Anti-viral treatment (Tamiflu) is not needed for LOW-RISK children.
 - Healthy children get better from flu by treating the symptoms.
2. **Treating Influenza With Antiviral Drug (such as Tamiflu):**
 - Tamiflu is a prescription anti-viral drug. It is helpful in treating the flu virus.
 - The benefits are limited. Tamiflu reduces the time your child is sick by 1 to 1.5 days. It helps reduce the symptoms, but does not make them go away.
 - For best results, these drugs should be started within 48 hours of flu symptoms. It's taken for a total of 5 days.
 - When to Use: Severe symptoms OR underlying health problems (HIGH-RISK group)
 - For HIGH-RISK children, call your child's doctor at the start of flu symptoms.
 - Most healthy patients have mild to moderate symptoms. Tamiflu treatment is not needed.
 - Tamiflu also has side effects. It causes vomiting in 10% of children.
 - Also, it is not used to prevent flu. Reason: You would need to take the medicine every day for months.

3. **HIGH-RISK Children for Complications From Influenza May Need Antiviral Drug:**
 - Children are considered HIGH-RISK for complications if they have any of the following:
 - Cancer or other weak immune system conditions
 - Diabetes, sickle cell disease, kidney disease OR liver disease
 - Down syndrome
 - Heart disease (such as a congenital heart disease)
 - Lung disease (such as asthma)
 - Neuromuscular disease (such as muscular dystrophy)
 - Obesity (BMI over 30)
 - Pregnancy
 - All healthy children under 2 years old are also considered HIGH-RISK (CDC)
 - Note: All other children are referred to as LOW-RISK
4. **Flu Shot - Best Protection:**
 - Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect your family from flu.
 - Influenza vaccines are strongly advised for all children over 6 months of age. (AAP)
 - Adults should also get the shot.
 - The flu shot most often prevents the disease.
 - Even if your child gets the flu, the shot helps to reduce the symptoms.
 - After the flu shot, it takes 2 weeks to get full protection. But then, the protection lasts for the entire flu season. By contrast, an antiviral medicine only protects from flu while you are taking it.
 - A new flu shot is needed every year. Reason: Flu viruses keep changing.
 - The flu shot prevents complications such as hospital admissions and deaths.
5. **Preventing Influenza With Antiviral Drug (such as Tamiflu):**
 - The drug Tamiflu may help prevent flu after close contact.
 - But, it is only advised for some HIGH-RISK patients (CDC). See the HIGH-RISK list.
 - Most doctors wait until flu symptoms start before treating. Reasons: Even after close contact, some children don't get flu. Also, Tamiflu is helpful only while your child is taking it. It won't prevent flu once your child stops taking it.
 - The CDC also recommends early treatment if flu symptoms occur, not preventive treatment.
 - If your child is High Risk, call your doctor within 24 hours of exposure. Your doctor will decide if an antiviral drug is needed. For example: a High Risk child living in home with person who has proven influenza illness. They usually receive Tamiflu for prevention.
 - HIGH-RISK adults with recent close contact should also call their doctor. The HIGH-RISK adult group includes chronic disease, pregnant, or over 65.
6. **How to Protect Yourself From Getting Sick:**
 - Wash hands often with soap and water.
 - Alcohol-based hand cleaners work very well.
 - Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth. Germs on the hands can spread this way.
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - Avoid ERs and urgent care clinics if you don't need to go. These are places where you are more likely to be exposed to flu.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your child is HIGH-RISK and exposed to flu
- Your child is HIGH-RISK child and develops symptoms of flu
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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