

Patient information

Seasonal Flu

Infection Prevention and Control

What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza (flu) is a highly infectious illness caused by a virus.

Flu occurs every year mainly during the winter months. The flu viruses are always changing, so this winter's flu virus will be different from last year's virus.

How is flu spread?

The influenza virus can spread very rapidly and is highly contagious.

It is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, spreading infected droplets into the air and exposes other people to potential infection.

The virus can also be spread by the hands of staff, patients and visitors.

What are the signs and symptoms of flu?

Seasonal flu normally presents with:

- a raised temperature
- cough (usually dry)
- headache.
- muscle and joint pain (myalgia)
- malaise (feeling unwell)
- sore throat and runny nose.

Most people recover from fever and other symptoms within a week without requiring medical attention.

In some people the virus can be more serious and can lead to complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia that may require hospital treatment.

How can I help prevent the spread of flu?

To prevent the spread of the virus, you should cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing. Place the tissue in a bin and wash your hands with soap and water.

If you have flu like symptoms inform the nurse caring for you. If one of your visitors has flu or flu like symptoms, they should **not** visit you in hospital.

How will I be treated for flu?

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight against the flu. Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics, which act against bacterial infections.

When used for treatment, antiviral drugs can lessen symptoms and shorten the time you are sick by one or two days. They also can prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia.

If you are in a 'high-risk' group and are more likely to suffer complications from flu, your doctor may prescribe antiviral medication.

If you have flu, it will usually be possible for you to treat yourself effectively at home; Take medicines such as Paracetamol or Aspirin to relieve the symptoms (**Aspirin should not be given to children under 12 years of age**).

- Stay at home, keep warm and rest – this will help you recover more quickly.
- Drink plenty of liquids to replace the fluid lost in sweating.
- Eat what you can.

If you live on your own tell a family member, friend or neighbour you are ill and ask if they can check on you. Also ask if they can bring you essential supplies as you may not feel up to shopping.

Contact your GP if:

- You are normally advised to have the seasonal flu vaccine.
- Your symptoms are getting worse.
- You require any additional information.

If you are worried it is best to discuss your symptoms by phone rather than attend your GP's surgery.

What is Liverpool University Hospitals doing to prevent the spread of flu?

Liverpool University Hospitals takes the risk of flu very seriously and has guidance for staff designed to limit the spread of flu:

- Patient and staff movement will be limited to prevent the spread of flu.
- Staff are trained to use the correct personal protective equipment to protect themselves and others.
- Patients suspected of having flu may be required to wear a surgical mask when being transported throughout the hospital.
- Areas affected by a flu outbreak will have restricted visiting.
- Staff are offered the flu vaccine yearly.

What should I do if I have any concerns about infection control?

We welcome your feedback and act on it. Therefore, if you have any comments, concerns or queries about infection control at Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust please do not hesitate to speak to the:

- Person in charge of your ward/ department.
- Infection Prevention and Control Team.

Alternatively, you could use the suggestions and comments box on each ward.

Further Information

Further information on infection prevention and control is available on the UK Health Security Agency website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/seasonal-influenza-guidance-data-and-analysis>

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Infection Prevention and Control Team

Aintree Hospital Tel: 0151 529 4930

Royal Liverpool Hospital Tel: 0151 706 4416

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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