

門診部 Outpatient Department

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Stay Strong & Fight Against Flu



養和醫院
Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital

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What is flu?

The influenza or flu is an acute respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

In Hong Kong, the flu outbreaks usually occur during January and March. The viruses may undergo frequent antigenic change and cause an epidemic. H5N1 avian flu virus is commonly found in birds and poultry, which in normal cases do not infect people.

Transmission

The flu is caught by inhaling droplets from coughs or sneezes or touching the body fluids of the infected people and then touching the mouth or nose. The incubation period is usually 1-3 days. H5N1 avian flu is caught by a very close contact with live poultry, but the virus is seldom infectious to people.

Symptoms

Common flu: fever ($>40^{\circ}\text{C}$), headache, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, muscle aches, stuffy nose, running nose, sore throat, cough and tiredness. These symptoms usually disappear within days. Older people with weak immunity and patients with chronic medical conditions are more likely to develop complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia.

Influenza A H5N1 (avian flu): the symptoms and the initial stage are typical of common flu, but the temperature can rise up to 41°C . Avian flu can damage liver functions, resulting in the reduction of lymphatic cells and respiratory distress, followed by failures of multiple organs and death.



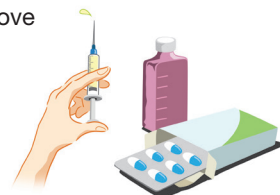
Treatment

The use of medicines is for relieving symptoms. Antiviral medicines are used when necessary. For instance, neuraminidase inhibitors can curb the spread of the virus in the body, hence preventing complications.

Vaccination

Currently, the Centre for Health Protection recommended the use of influenza vaccine for the following groups of people to alleviate the onset of symptoms and minimise the complications and risks of death:

- Elderly persons lived in residential care homes
- Long-stay residents of institutions of the disabled
- Elderly patients aged 65 or above
- Persons with chronic illnesses
- Healthcare workers
- Poultry workers
- Children aged 6 to 23 months



Prevention

To prevent influenza, effective measures include building up good body immunity, adopting a healthy lifestyle and adherence to good personal and environmental hygiene. During the flu season, it is better to avoid visiting crowded public places.

Avian flu infection can be prevented by thoroughly cooking poultry and eggs before eating. Avoid direct contact with birds and poultry or wash the hands thoroughly if contact has been made. People who develop fever and respiratory symptoms after returning from regions with recent avian influenza cases should seek medical consultation and reveal their recent travel history to the attending doctors.

H5 avian influenza vaccination for all live chickens has been implemented. Through surveillance by the government and preventive measures by all concerned, Hong Kong can be expected to remain a healthy city with zero infection.