

## INFECTION PREVENTION

### Seasonal Influenza (Flu)

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

This leaflet will give you information on:

- Symptoms of seasonal flu
- How you may catch seasonal flu
- What happens if you have flu like symptoms
- How long will I be infectious for?
- What can I do to protect myself?



## Seasonal Influenza (Flu)

### What are the symptoms of seasonal flu?

The main symptoms are:

- High temperature – above 38°C
- Cough
- Joint or muscle pains
- Sore throat, runny nose.

In addition to these, other symptoms may include:

- Headache
- Fatigue/unusual tiredness
- Feeling sick or being sick or diarrhoea

### How can I catch it?

The virus is contagious and can spread between people.

This can be spread 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.

### What happens if you have flu like symptoms or a heavy cold?

- A swab will be taken from your nose and mouth to see if you are carrying the virus
- You will be isolated in a side-room, or placed with other patients who have flu symptoms whilst awaiting the results of the swab.
- Healthcare workers may wear special masks whilst caring for you. You may need to wear a mask if you are being transferred or visiting departments for tests.

### How long will I 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. People are considered no longer infectious as soon as they start to feel better or five days from the start of symptoms whichever is sooner. Children and people with multiple health conditions are considered no longer infectious as

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soon as they start to feel better or 10 days from the start of symptoms whichever is sooner.

### What can I do to protect against infection?

- Washing hands with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face or to other people
- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue.
- Throwing away dirty tissues once you have used them.
- Cleaning hard surfaces frequently using normal cleaning products
- Have your flu vaccination at the beginning of each flu season if you are:
  - Over 65
  - In a high risk group
  - A healthcare worker
  - Pregnant
  - Have a long-term condition e.g. diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease etc.
- Please tell your friends and relatives not to visit if they have flu symptoms

### I am pregnant, am I at particular risk?

You may be at greater risk of catching seasonal flu because your immune system is likely to be weaker. Therefore, you should talk to your GP or ward staff before visiting anyone with flu. Pregnant women are strongly advised to get vaccinated against flu.

### How to provide feedback

Our aim is to provide a quality of care we would want for ourselves, our families and friends. If there was anything that we could have done please let us know via the department/ward staff or the patient experience team available on 01432 372986 or email [PALs@wvt.nhs.uk](mailto:PALs@wvt.nhs.uk) (opening times may vary).

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, Audio tape or other languages upon request. Please contact patient experience team on the above telephone number.

You may be asked to give your opinion on the service you have received. We welcome your feedback as this will help us to improve the care and treatment we provide to our patients.

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