

Section: Medical Exposure Control Plan – Information Fact Sheets
Subject: INFLUENZA
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1. Identification

- a. Influenza is an acute viral disease of the respiratory tract characterized by fever, headache, myalgia, prostration, coryza, sore throat, and cough. Cough is often severe and protracted, but other manifestations are usually self-limited with recovery in 2–7 days. Influenza season is normally from November to March in the United States.

2. Infectious Agents

- a. The infection agents are Influenza type A, type B, and type C. These influenza A and B undergo frequent minor antigenic changes necessitating periodic reformulation of influenza vaccine.

3. Susceptibility

- a. All children and adults are equally susceptible, but in a classic epidemic the children will spread the disease to adults. Vaccines produce serologic responses specific for that virus strain and subtype.

4. Mode of Transmission

- a. Airborne spread predominates among crowded populations in enclosed spaces, such as school buses. Transmission may also occur by direct contact since the Influenza virus may persist for hours, particularly in cold and in low humidity.

5. Incubation Period

- a. Usually 1 – 3 days

6. Period of Communicability

- a. Probably 3 – 5 days from clinical onset in adults: up to 7 days in young children

7. Isolation

- a. Universal precautions for airborne pathogens and secretion precautions

8. Exposure Management

- a. Education in basic personal hygiene, especially the danger of unprotected coughs and sneezes, and hand-to-mucous membrane transmission. Immunization should also be considered for those engaged in essential community services and is recommended for medical personnel.

9. Vaccination

- a. Yearly vaccination is recommended for children, the elderly, and health care workers.
- b. Influenza type A and B create subtypes within a 12 month cycle period.

10. References

- a. Professional Guide to Diseases, Sixth Edition 1998, Springhouse Corp., Springhouse, Penn.
- b. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, Sixteenth Edition 1995, American Public Health Assoc., Washington, D.C.
- c. Communicable Disease Information, Seattle – King County Department of Public Health web site, www.metrokc.gov/health/prevent/hepa.htm
- d. Infectious Diseases, Armstrong & Cohen, Mosby 1999, Volumes 1 & 2.