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## Influenza

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**Description:** Influenza (sometimes called “the flu”) is a viral infection of the nose, throat, bronchial tubes and lungs. There are two main types of influenza virus: A and B. Type A virus tends to cause more severe illness than type B. Each type includes many different strains which tend to change each year. Most people who get influenza will recover in one to two weeks, but some people will develop life-threatening complications as a result of the flu.

**Symptoms:** Influenza symptoms include sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, sore muscles and respiratory symptoms (such as cough, sore throat or runny nose).

**How it is Spread:** The influenza virus is usually passed when an infected person coughs or sneezes or speaks and another person inhales droplets containing the virus. It can be passed indirectly by contact with items freshly soiled by nose and throat discharge from an infected person.

**Incubation:** 1-3 days.

**How Long Can a Person Spread the Disease to Others?** Twenty-four hours prior to onset of symptoms through three days after onset and can be longer in young children.

**Responsibility for Parents and Caregivers:** If a child or staff person develops a fever of 100°F or higher under the arm (or 101° orally for an adult) AND chills, cough, sore throat, headache or muscle aches, he or she should be sent home. Child care facilities should report of any case of influenza to the local health department.

(See ODH Communicable Disease Chart)

During an epidemic of influenza you should:

- Closely observe all children for symptoms and encourage parents to refer anyone developing symptoms to his or her physician.
- Make sure all children and adults follow good hand washing and hygiene practices including use and proper disposal of paper tissues.
- In large facilities, follow appropriate group separation practices.
- Closely observe all children for symptoms and refer anyone developing symptoms to his or her physician.
- Notify parents.

**Control:** Anyone who wants to reduce their chance of catching influenza may receive the vaccination. Because the influenza virus changes frequently, yearly vaccination in beginning in October is recommended for protection from influenza.

Influenza vaccination is recommended for all adults in the child care setting, especially those who are in any of the following high-risk categories:

- Fifty years of age and over.
- Have chronic lung or heart disease including asthma.
- Require regular medical care for chronic metabolic (including diabetes mellitus), kidney, blood or suppressed immune system.
- People with any condition that can compromise respiratory function.
- Live or work with people who are in any of the above categories (or with children on long-term aspirin therapy).
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season.

Any child 6 months and older can be vaccinated against influenza. Children in the following groups are at high risk of serious disease with influenza and should be vaccinated:

- All children 6 to 23 months of age.
- Have chronic lung (including asthma) or heart disease.
- Require regular medical care for chronic metabolic (including diabetes mellitus), kidney, blood or suppressed immune system diseases.
- Are on long-term aspirin therapy.
- Children who are in frequent contact, at home or in the child care setting, with people who are in any of the above high-risk categories should be vaccinated against influenza.

**Treatment:** Persons with influenza should rest, drink plenty of liquids, take medications to relieve the symptoms of the flu. Antiviral drugs, prescribed by a doctor, can be used to prevent and treat influenza.