

What are these viruses?

There are probably hundreds of variants of viruses that cause upper respiratory disease, colds, etc. As a group of viruses, they can cause economic loss, personal suffering, and even death.

What are the symptoms of an infection with these viruses?

Many of these viruses will invade any part of the respiratory tract. Common symptoms are runny nose, cough, sneezing, and respiratory distress.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms can occur between 12 hours and 5 days after infection.

How are these viruses spread?

Viruses are spread by direct contact with someone who is ill by contact with airborne droplets when they cough or sneeze, and probably most importantly, by indirect contact with soiled tissues or contaminated hands carrying viruses to the eyes and nose.

Who gets these infections?

Everyone is susceptible to viral respiratory illness, especially considering there are so many different kinds of these viruses.

How long is a person infectious?

People are able to spread these viruses from 24 hours before illness to five days after the illness begins.

What are the treatments for these illnesses?

Antibiotics work on bacteria not viruses and therefore are ineffective against influenza. In some cases, physicians may use anti-viral drugs for chronically ill children or adults.

Do infected people need to be excluded from school, work, or daycare?

No, but ill people should use respiratory etiquette so they do NOT expose others.

What can be done to help prevent the spread of these viruses?

- Handwashing is the single most important means to prevent infecting yourself and to prevent the spread of disease from you to someone else.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing with disposable tissues. If tissues are not available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve rather than your hands. Wash your hands whenever possible after coughing or sneezing.
- Make an ample supply of facial tissues readily available to all persons, and an easily accessible container for proper disposal of tissues.
- Avoid crowded living and sleeping quarters, when possible.
- Provide adequate ventilation.
- Clean common use surfaces such as door handles, handrails, and eating surfaces frequently with household disinfectant.
- Avoid smoking in households and other public environments, especially around infants, small children, and anyone with lung conditions such as asthma.
- Stay at home if experiencing moderate to severe upper respiratory symptoms (such as frequent coughing and sneezing) to prevent spread to others.
- Consult with your physician if you experience severe cough, symptoms lasting more than a few days, fever equal to or higher than 101° F, rash, severe headache or difficulty breathing.
- Get an influenza vaccine every year and ask your doctor about the pneumococcal vaccine.