

### Christchurch Hospital

#### What is Influenza?

Influenza or 'Flu' is a viral infection which can affect all of the respiratory system – nose, throat and the lungs as well as other body systems. Many people refer to colds as “the flu”, but influenza is a more severe respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus. Flu will not be helped by antibiotics. However, antibiotics will be necessary if a bacterial infection develops as a result of the flu, e.g. pneumonia. Special care is needed for children, the elderly or those with other health problems. Young children with flu need to be seen by their GP.

#### How do you get Influenza?

Influenza is spread very easily by infected people coughing and sneezing and by contact with their respiratory secretions. Children should be kept at home while they are unwell to prevent the spread of infection.

#### Signs and Symptoms

The severity of symptoms varies between patients. Common symptoms are: muscle aches and pains; runny nose and cough; sore throat; fever; headaches; sore eyes; lethargy; poor appetite. The nurse or doctor may do a nasal swab to confirm the diagnosis.

#### Treatment

Some children with influenza may need to stay in hospital because of complications such as dehydration or pneumonia. Most children are able to be cared for at home.

Your child may be treated with Tamiflu if flu is diagnosed within 48 hours of your child's first symptoms.

#### What makes it better?

- Plenty of rest
- Plenty of fluids. Try jelly, ice blocks.
- Paracetamol as prescribed for pain and misery.
- **Do not give aspirin based medications to a child** as they can be harmful to children.

Your child may be unwell for up to 7–10 days and their appetite and energy levels may take longer to return to normal.

If you feel your child's condition is getting worse, you should take them back to your GP.

#### How much Paracetamol should I give?

The usual dose is 15mg of paracetamol per kg of body weight, no more often than 4 hourly, no more than 4 doses per day.

Do not give regularly for more than two days. See your GP if they are still feverish.

For example, if your child weighs 10kg: 15mg x 10kg = 150mg 4 hourly.

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The usual dose for your child is: \_\_\_\_\_ Based on today's weight of \_\_\_\_\_ kg



Paracetamol liquid comes in two strengths: 120mg/5mls and 250mg/5mls. Please check that you are giving the right dose for the strength you have. Make sure that medicines always have a child proof cap and that bottles are stored out of reach.

#### Flu Vaccines

If your child is at high risk for complications from flu, your doctor may suggest your child has an annual flu vaccine: e.g. diabetes, immune system problems or chronic lung problems. The vaccine will improve your child's chances of not getting the flu but does not provide 100% protection. New vaccines are made each year depending on the type of virus that is around. The influenza vaccine will not stop your child getting ordinary coughs and colds. The vaccine should not be given to children under six months of age, those with an anaphylactic allergy to eggs or other vaccine components. **If you think your child needs a flu vaccine, please discuss this with your GP.**

#### Seek Medical help if your child:

- Looks unwell
- Has difficulty breathing
- Becomes floppy or lethargic
- Continues to have fevers for longer than 10 days

Information on your child's admission will be sent to your GP.

#### Have you changed GP's? Do we have your current GP recorded correctly?

If you do not have a regular GP, please talk to your nurse who can give you a list of GP's in your area.

**If you have been discharged from the Children's Acute Assessment Unit, one of the nurses will phone you the next day to check on your child's progress and answer any questions you may have.**

**If you are concerned over the next 24 hours, please contact us on 364 0428**

**Continue to contact your GP for ongoing care of your child**

Children's health information website: [www.kidshealth.org.nz](http://www.kidshealth.org.nz)

Christchurch Hospital website: [www.cdhb.govt.nz](http://www.cdhb.govt.nz)

