

Infection prevention & healthcare facilities

Staying healthy at home



ACIPC

Australasian College
for Infection Prevention and Control

Anyone can prevent getting an infection and different seasons bring different risks of infection.

Spring and summer healthy

These are the seasons where we get out of the house and head to the parks, beaches and pools to enjoy family time in the open. The smell of barbeques is in the air. And we see shared picnics on the sandy beaches and grassy parks. It also the time of gastroenteritis (norovirus, rotavirus, etc), food poisoning (salmonella, etc), and mosquito borne diseases (Ross River virus, dengue fever, etc).

What can you do to prevent infections?

Food safety

Food poisoning can be very serious for anyone, preparing food safely is key to avoiding infection.

Prepare food safely.

Wash your hands before cooking, clean the food preparation area, use clean and separate utensils and cutting boards for uncooked meat, chicken or fish and other foods. Do not handle food if you are ill.

Cook foods thoroughly.

Thaw frozen food in the fridge. Meat and chicken is adequately cooked if the juices from the centre are clear and the meat is no longer pink.

Store foods at safe temperatures.

Perishable food needs to be refrigerated or kept hot.

Total time at room temperature (5°C - 60°C)

The total time includes all the time the food has been at room temperature, for example during delivery, preparing and storage.

Food can be cooled rapidly by:

- » Placing food in the refrigerator as soon as it stops steaming.
- » Dividing food into smaller sizes and placing in shallow containers before cooling.

Transport food safely.

Transport food in insulated containers if the trip takes longer than ½ an hour.

Store food safely.

If food is kept for later, ensure it is placed into the fridge. Foods that require freezing should be frozen and not placed into the fridge for storage.

For further information...

Go to Food Safety Information Council

Total time at room temperature (5°C - 60°C)



Under 2 hours

OK to use or refrigerate at 5°C or less



2-4 hours

OK to use



Over 4 hours

THROW AWAY

Mosquito borne diseases

In summer being outside places us at risk of bites from mosquitos that may carry different infections such as Ross River virus, Barmah Forest Virus Infection, Malaria and Japanese Encephalitis.

Things that may help to protect you:

- » Use personal 'tropical strength' insect repellents containing 'DEET' or 'picaridin' (always read the label and follow manufacturers guidelines, particularly for infants).
- » Use a plug-in zapper (indoors).
- » Use mosquito coils (indoors and outdoors).
- » When looking at somewhere to stay, choose screened or air-conditioned rooms/houses.
- » In the home, close screen doors and windows and get rid of any containers that can hold water, where dengue mosquitoes like to breed.
- » Empty paddling pools at the end of the day.
- » Keep swimming pools chlorinated.
- » Put a screen over inlets to rain water tanks (no more than 1mm diameter holes in the screen).
- » Wear long, loose clothing outdoors whenever mosquitoes are around.
- » If camping, sleep under a mosquito net and zip up tents if possible.

For further information...

Parenting & Child Health

Queensland Health

Infection prevention & healthcare facilities

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Autumn and winter healthy

These are the seasons where we get back into the house and turn up the heat using our air-conditioners, gas heaters or log fires. It's also the time when we get close and confined and love to share. It's the time of colds and flu's, as well as pneumonias.

Most cases of influenza occur within a six to eight-week period during winter and early spring. Each year, there are over 80,000 GP visits due to flu in Australia.

Seasonal influenza

What is influenza?

Influenza, usually called the flu, is caused by a virus and spreads from person to person through the air by coughing, sneezing or talking, and by touching a person's hands, a surface or object.

How does it infect?

The flu virus infects your breathing through the nose, throat and sometimes your lungs. It differs from a cold as the symptoms such as fever, sore throat and muscle aches develop quickly and last about a week. You can have a very mild to a severe flu, and at times you can develop complications such as pneumonia and bronchitis which require a hospital visit. Sometimes these complications can lead to death.

If you have other medical conditions such as diabetes etc, it can make them worse. There is a need to get vaccinated every year because the viruses circulating in the community are always changing and immunity from the vaccine does not last a long time. It is especially important that people at risk get a flu shot each year.

4 things you might not know about the flu shot!

1. There is no live virus in the flu shot.
2. What's in the vaccine changes every year.
3. The flu shot is safe for pregnant women at all stages of their pregnancy.
4. CSL Fluvax is not recommended for children under 5 years of age.

Who should get vaccinated?

The flu vaccine is recommended for anyone from 6 months of age who wants to be protected against the flu. Free flu vaccine is available for the following people:

- » Anyone aged 65 years and over.
- » Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from 15 years of age.
- » Pregnant women.
- » Anyone over 6 months of age with one or more of the following medical conditions:
 - » heart disease.
 - » severe asthma.
 - » chronic lung condition.
 - » chronic illness requiring medical follow-up or hospitalisation in the past year.
 - » diseases of the nervous system.
 - » impaired immunity.
 - » diabetes.
- » Children aged 6 months to 10 years who are on long-term aspirin therapy.

For further information....

Immunise Australia

Colds

The runny nose, headache, sore throat or "stuffy" feeling you get during a common cold is caused by one of many viruses - often a rhinovirus - and they can infect your nose, throat, sinuses and airways. The symptoms are usually a blocked or runny nose, sneezing, sore throat and a cough. You might also have a fever, mild aching muscles and general tiredness. These symptoms usually last for less than a week.

Steps to prevent the spread?

There are steps you can take when you have a cold or flu, to help prevent spreading illness:

- » Try to stay away from other people to prevent the virus from spreading.
- » Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing and wash your hands.
- » Throw away tissues as soon as you have used them and wash your hands.
- » Stay home from work to prevent spreading it to others and keep children home from school.

For more information...

Health Insite, NPS Medicine Wise