

# –Seasonal Influenza–



## <What is influenza?>

Influenza starts with a feeling of being really sick all over, mainly infects the respiratory organs, is highly contagious and prevalent in winter.

There are 3 types of influenza A, B and C. Recently, most seasonal outbreaks are caused by two of the following three subtypes: influenza A (Hong-Kong), influenza A (USSR) and influenza B.

Due to slight genetic mutations that occur almost annually, most people are susceptible to seasonal influenza.

When major genetic mutations occur, new types of the influenza virus form. This can result in a global pandemic. The influenza virus is extremely contagious and since it prefers a cold, dry climate, it can spread very easily and rapidly among large groups of people during the winter. It has an incubation period of 1-2 days. Symptoms include the sudden onset of a high fever with chills which can last 3-5 days. Compared to a common cold, symptoms such as feeling really sick all over, joint pain, muscle aches, headaches, sickness and diarrhea, coughing, runny nose and sore throat are more severe.

## <Treatment>

### ▪Symptomatic treatment

Medicines to relieve the cough and sputum as well as to bring down the fever will be prescribed.

### ▪Antiviral treatment

Starting antiviral medication within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms will help speed up your child's recovery and the duration of the fever may be shortened by one to two days. Healthy children do not need antiviral treatment, since it may cause severe side effects. You should consult your doctor about their usage.

## <Important>

• **Do not** leave your child alone during the first 48 hours of the onset of symptoms since they may become disorientated due to the side effects of antiviral drugs, especially oseltamivir phosphate (Tamiflu)

If your child does suffer some side effects, they may hallucinate, become violent or try to jump out of windows.

• Do not use medicines that contain aspirin to reduce your child's fever due to the increased risk of Reye's syndrome (= acute encephalitis with liver failure).

## <When treating your child at home>

**Nourishment & fluids** ~ Give your child anything s/he likes, food that is easy to eat or digest. Make sure they drink adequate amounts of fluids (small amounts frequently).

**Rest** ~ Staying in bed at home is best. Keep the room at a moderate temperature and make sure the air is not too dry, especially in winter. (Dry, cold air is harmful for the respiratory tract, but beneficial for the survival of the virus)

**Bathing** ~ Letting your child have a quick bath or shower is okay. However, if they are not feeling well or have a high fever then refrain from bathing them

**School/Nursery** ~ Your child shouldn't attend school or nursery until at least 48 hours after their fever has dropped. This is to avoid infecting other children.

## <When to seek further medical advice>

Bronchitis, pneumonia and encephalitis are known complications. When your child has a severe cough, prolonged high fever, is not lucid or speaks nonsense, you should consult your doctor immediately.

You should also consult your doctor if your child is not getting enough fluids, is lethargic or his/her urine output has decreased.

