

Patient Information Sheet – Coronavirus Covid 19

Influenza (or flu) is a serious illness. A 'cold' is often called the 'flu', but they are different infections caused by viruses. Coronavirus Covid-19 is a virus that attacks the respiratory system.

Flu symptoms usually start suddenly with a high fever and you may feel unwell enough to need rest. Symptoms can include irritation in the throat or lungs, a dry cough, shivering, sweating and severe muscle aches. The flu tends to make the whole body ache, whereas colds usually affect the nose and throat only.

Because symptoms of Coronavirus Covid-19 are similar to a cold or influenza many people will need to be tested.

The management of mild Coronavirus is very similar to the management of influenza. The additional precaution is compulsory self isolation whilst waiting for results then 14 days afterward if testing confirms Coronavirus.

The influenza vaccine is recommended in autumn for people who are at risk of serious complications. Ask your doctor for more information about vaccination for you and your family. Having the influenza vaccine will not prevent you from getting colds or Coronavirus but it will reduce your risks of getting both at the same time or consecutively.

How are viruses spread?

Viruses are usually passed from person to person by touching hands or objects (e.g. tissues and toys) or by breathing in droplets from sneezes and coughs.

To help prevent the spread of viruses:

- cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing keep hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth use tissues to blow your nose, and throw them away after use
- wash your hands regularly with soap – lather your hands well and rinse, particularly before preparing, touching or eating food and after blowing your nose. Avoid sharing cups, glasses and cutlery. Avoid touching your face after touching surfaces which people may have touched before you, eg shopping trolley's, chair arms, stair rails, magazines in waiting rooms, taps, door handles and so on. Wash your hands regularly or use an alcohol based hand sanitiser\anti-bacterial hand gel.

IF YOU ARE UNWELL - STAY HOME AND RING YOUR DOCTOR

You may be asked questions and this will determine how your care is managed. If you have coughs, colds or fevers wear a mask if you have one. If you are given a doctor's appointment you may be asked to stay in the car and ring us on arrival. Confirm your telephone number with reception and we will tell you when to come in.

Relieve the symptoms

- If you can, ill members of a household should use their own bathroom, keep 2 metres from other family members and wear a mask when around well family.
- Rest may help to fight the virus and help you, your child or your family member feel better.
- Drink something soothing.
- Encourage children to drink their usual amount of fluids.
- Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke.
- Some medicines can relieve the symptoms of a virus. Paracetamol may be used for mild temperatures only at the recommended doses and intervals. Always ask your pharmacist or doctor for advice on the most appropriate medicine for you or your child and **always read the label**. Over-the-counter medicines for colds, coughs or flu can cause serious side effects. Some people may not be able to use certain medicines, including: people with particular medical conditions or taking certain medicines children and older people women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

- Relieve blocked sinuses, clear mucus or dry a runny nose Saline (salt water) sprays or drops can help clear mucus. Inhale steam from a running shower. Do not sit children over a steam bowl as hot water can burn the lining of a child's nose, and the water can spill. Decongestant tablets, mixtures, sprays or drops help some adults relieve blocked sinuses. Use an ointment to soothe dry or chapped skin around your nose. Soothe a sore throat or cough Gargle warm salty water. Suck on ice or a throat lozenge. Common pain relief medicines like paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin can ease the pain of a sore throat. Aspirin is not suitable for children and some adults. As with all medicines, supplements and herbal and natural medicines can cause side effects and may negatively interact with other medicines. Their benefits and risks may not have been tested adequately. This is particularly the case for use in children.

If you get worse and you have been cleared of Coronavirus with testing

- **Ring your General Practice first** – you may need to see your doctor
Colds may make ongoing medical conditions worse (e.g. asthma or diabetes). See your doctor if this situation relates to you. Some serious illnesses may initially seem like cold or flu symptoms but may require urgent medical attention.
- **Ring your GP Practice first:** Tell them if your symptoms appear suddenly, are severe or last longer than usual. Your doctor can check the severity of the illness, tell you how long it should last, give advice on treatment and provide a medical certificate if needed.

See your doctor if you or your child develops any of the following: OR if your child or baby has any of the following:

- bulging of the fontanelle (the soft spot on top of a baby's head)
- a high temperature (in babies under 6 months of age) excessive irritability
- a strange, high-pitched cry
- lack of energy loss of appetite/ not drinking/ feeding poorly
- earache
- temperature higher than 38.5o C, or chills
- shortness of breath,
- noisy or fast breathing
- neck stiffness, severe headache, light hurting the eyes, chest pain, difficulty waking up or unusual drowsiness, a skin rash, vomiting, persistent cough, aching muscles

If you get worse and you have NOT been cleared of Coronavirus with testing

- If mildly unwell then rest, keep on healthy foods and fluids and use paracetamol if in pain.
- If feeling worse - ring 13HEALTH (1343254) for free advice.
- Phone advice from the practice is available. Fees and rebates may apply. Remain at home in isolation until we can call you back.
- If very unwell (shortness of breath, worse cough, high fevers, dizziness, unable to eat or drink for extended time periods) go to the Fever clinic at the Gold Coast University hospital. The Fever Clinic operates 1pm to 9pm daily. Wear a mask. A nurse will meet you at the entrance and tell you what to do. Avoid catching public transport.
- If you need to call an ambulance be sure to tell them you carry infection and if you will be wearing a mask or not when they arrive.