

Medical guidance notes and information

Colds and 'flu

Colds and influenza ('flu) symptoms are very similar. Both conditions are caused by viruses. There are many different types of these viruses which is the reason for you catching the infections again and again. Different strains of the 'flu virus are anticipated each year.

Many people confuse colds with 'flu. Colds are more common, only last a few days and tend to be less serious than 'flu. 'Flu symptoms are more severe, last longer and you can feel 'under the weather' for a week or so after the illness.

Prevention

Although it is difficult to prevent yourself from catching colds and 'flu, you can reduce the risk of catching the infection by looking after yourself.

- Keep away from infected people where possible;
- Always cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing and coughing and advise others to do so;
- Avoid physical contact e.g. shaking hands with an infected person;
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet (fresh fruit, vegetables and Vitamin C);
- Take regular physical exercise.

Influenza ('flu) Vaccination

The Chief Medical Officer of England recommends 'flu vaccination for:

- Those aged 65 years and over;
- Those who suffer from chronic respiratory, heart and kidney disease;
- Those who have Diabetes mellitus;
- Those who suffer immuno-suppressed conditions e.g. HIV/AIDS;
- All those living in long stay residential accommodation.

Occupational Health offers a programme of 'flu vaccinations in the autumn/Winter months at different locations and at Townsend House. The dates and times are advertised company wide.

Home Treatment

Colds and 'flu have no cure. You do not need antibiotics unless you have a chest, throat or ear infection. Follow these simple steps:

- Rest with no strenuous exercise. For 'flu illness try to take short walks when you feel able to do so and stay at home until symptoms subside.
- Drink plenty of fluids – e.g. water, juices and other non-alcoholic fluids.
- Take simple painkillers e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen or soluble aspirin. Always read label and follow instructions.

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- See your doctor if you have a chesty cough, sore chest, earache or if you become concerned.
- Blow your nose gently, one nostril at a time.
- Use steam inhalation if you have catarrh.
- Decongestant nasal drops or a spray may help.
- Cough medicines may help if you have a cough - Do refer to LUOH Guidance Notes on Cold and Cough Medications which are acceptable for safety critical work.
- Don't smoke and keep away from dry smoky environments.

Some people find it helpful to take Vitamin C and Zinc supplements to aid recovery.

Work

If you feel well enough and your flu symptoms have subsided you should return to work.

You must notify your manager as soon as your medication is obtained preferably prior to presenting for duty.

Issued – September 2010

G1179 A1 10/10/2011