

Asymptomatic influenza transmission

Influenza.
Don't get it.
Don't give it.

April 2017

Influenza transmission by infected but asymptomatic people

Influenza is caused by different strains of influenza viruses. The ability to spread influenza viruses and infect others is usually equated to how much influenza virus is shed by an infected person.¹

Exposure to influenza virus can lead to infection but not every infected person will have symptoms or feel unwell.¹⁻⁷

Studies have compared viral shedding by asymptomatic individuals, i.e. those who are infected but have no symptoms, with symptomatic individuals, i.e. those who are infected and have symptoms such as fever, sore throat, muscles aches and pains.^{2,4,5,7} Viral shedding by asymptomatic persons occurs for around 3–4 days and by symptomatic persons for around five days.^{5,7} The amount of virus shed by asymptomatic persons was only slightly less than that shed by those with symptoms.^{2,5,6}

Asymptomatic persons shed influenza virus and can infect others despite a seemingly more robust immune response to infection that stops development of symptoms.⁴

References

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