



A guide to...

Respiratory Viruses

Patient Information

How to contact us

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If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 198** or email westherts.pals@nhs.net



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Respiratory Viruses

Respiratory viruses circulate throughout the year, some viruses such as influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) are seasonal whereas others such as COVID-19 and Human Metapneumovirus can circulate throughout the year.

Symptoms and Testing

If you have a high temperature and one or more of the following symptoms you may be tested for respiratory viruses:

- New and continuous cough
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- Shortness of breath
- feeling tired or exhausted
- an aching body
- a headache
- a sore throat
- a blocked or runny nose
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea
- feeling sick or being sick.

To take the test, your healthcare professional will use a swab to sample your throat and nose. While the result of the test is awaited, you will be moved to a single room until the result is known. The test can take up to 48 hours to come back with a result.

Mode of Spread

The mode of spread is predominantly airborne for COVID-19 and influenza which are smaller microorganisms and droplets than for other respiratory viruses. It is also possible to spread through direct and indirect contact, such as contaminated hands or surfaces. Some procedures carried out in hospital such as a bronchoscopy and intubation can cause any respiratory viruses to become aerosolised.

Prevention of Infection

It is recommended to receive a vaccine if you are eligible, to protect yourself against influenza, COVID-19 or RSV. Your GP will have information on this.

During your hospital stay ensure you clean your hands using a sink, hand sanitiser or hand wipe. Please ask your nurse if you would like help accessing hand hygiene. It is advisable to clean your hands before eating, touching your face, handling any medical devices you may have and after using the toilet.

When coughing or sneezing please use a tissue and dispose of in a yellow bin followed by cleaning your hands.

Our hospitals are cleaned to a national standard to prevent infections, if you have any feedback about the cleanliness of the department please speak to a member of staff.

Outbreaks of Respiratory Viruses

If there is an outbreak of a respiratory virus in the department, you will be informed by a member of staff. During outbreaks of respiratory viruses, you will see extra measures in place such as staff and visitors wearing masks and touch point cleaning. We encourage patients to also wear a mask if you can.

Placement

While you are waiting for your test result or if you are found to be positive for a respiratory virus you will be placed in a single room or in a bay with patients with the same infection. Healthcare workers will wear masks, aprons and gloves while caring for you. Visitors will be asked to wear face masks and clean their hands before entering and leaving.

You will remain in your single room until you no longer have a fever for 48 hours, or after five days for COVID-19. It is safe for you to go home or your usual place of residence if you are planned to be discharged before then.

Treatment

Most respiratory viral infections do not require treatment however if you are identified as having influenza or in contact with someone who has had influenza (i.e. in the same hospital bay) your medical team will start you on treatment. In some cases of COVID-19, antivirals may be started depending on your clinical condition. If you have any queries, please speak to your doctor.