

How to Prevent and Treat Influenza

Medicine

When public health officers and scientists, attempting to solve the mystery of influenza, gathered in war conference at the call of the U. S. Public Health Service, they formulated advice to individuals for protection against and treatment of influenza.

For Protection

Make more than the ordinary effort to increase your well-being when influenza, colds and upper respiratory infections are prevalent, the conference recommended.

Nine "do and don'ts" useful in guarding against the disease were formulated as follows:

1. Secure adequate sleep and rest (eight to ten hours' sleep every night with windows open, but under enough covering to keep warm).
2. Eat a moderate, mixed diet and partake freely, at regular periods, of pure water (six to eight glasses daily).
3. Wear clothing to suit the environment, particularly clothing which prevents chilling of the body surfaces and which keeps the body dry.
4. Avoid people with colds, especially those who are sneezing or coughing. There is more danger from contact with those just beginning to feel sick than from those ill enough to be confined to bed.
5. Keep out of crowds as far as possible, especially crowds in closed places.
6. Avoid the use of common towels, wash basins, glasses, eating utensils and toilet articles.
7. Wash the hands thoroughly before eating.
8. Avoid the use of any so-called preventives. Vaccines, sera and advertised preventatives seem to be of no value and may be harmful in this disease.
9. Avoid alcohol and stimulants of all sorts.

For Treatment

If you get the disease, follow these four recommendations of the influenza conference to prevent becoming seriously ill:

1. If you have a cold, feel badly, or are feverish, go to bed at once, cover up warmly and have the windows open; send for a physician and follow his instructions.
2. Do not take any so-called cures. There is no specific cure for this disease.

3. If you cannot get a doctor, remain in bed, eat a simple diet, take plenty of fluids, such as water, fruit juices, milk, bouillon, hot soups, at frequent intervals. Use a mild cathartic if constipated.

4. Remember that the most important measure of preventing pneumonia or other serious complications is to remain in bed until all symptoms have disappeared and then, under the physician's advice, to return very gradually to your physical activities, being sure to rest before you get tired.

The present epidemic is influenza. This is the verdict of the influenza conference called by the U. S. Public Health Service.

Early in November it began in the vicinity of San Francisco. It extended, with characteristic rapidity and in regular sequence, from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

"The epidemic is already on the decline in those western cities which were first affected; and has apparently reached its peak in some middle western cities, but in the east seems not yet to have reached its full development," said a committee report to the conference. "The effect on mortality has not approximated that caused by the pandemic of 1918, and has been less than the epidemic of 1920, but more severe than at any time since the latter date."

Stigmata of the "Flu"

The features which have distinguished influenza in its typical pandemic outbreaks, such as those in 1918 and 1889-90, as listed by the conference, are:

1. A great increase in the prevalence of illness of which the usual symptoms are: fever, of more or less sudden onset, of moderately high range and of only a few days' duration; aching of the body and limbs; inflammation of the upper respiratory passages, and marked prostration. In its manner of spread this disease has the characteristics of a highly contagious infection, transmitted directly from person to person.
2. Coincident increase in the prevalence of pneumonia, developing apparently as a complication of a certain proportion of the influenza cases.
3. A rise in the general mortality rate, due largely to increase in deaths certified as influenza or pneumonia. These deaths characteristically show an age-distribution different from that of normal times, in that the proportion of young adults is increased.

4. In any given locality, the epidemic develops and runs its course rapidly, so that its duration, even in a large city, is a matter of not more than five or ten weeks.

5. The tendency is to rapid and wide extension, different communities being attacked in such quick succession that the spread across a continent requires only a few weeks, and where the disease becomes pandemic it travels around the world within three to six months.

The epidemics which show the full development of all these features, including world-wide prevalence, are rather rare events, recurring at intervals which usually have exceeded 20 years. However, at much more frequent intervals we have minor epidemics, similar in general character, but differing from the typical picture in some respects, notably in lower prevalence, less severe clinical type, slighter effect on mortality and less extensive area of spread. The exact relationship which these bear to true pandemic influenza is still a matter of investigation rather than fixed opinion; but the more distinct of the minor epidemics are generally accepted as true influenza of modified virulence and intensity. Since 1919 at least two such outbreaks have occurred in the United States; one in 1920 and one in 1926, with some more doubtful epidemics in other years.

Science News-Letter, January 19, 1929

Health Institute Proposed

Hygiene

A national institute of health, to be under the administration of the Surgeon General of the United States, would be established in the District of Columbia, at an approximate cost of \$1,000,000, under the terms of a bill just introduced in the House by Representative John J. Kindred, Democrat, of New York.

Kindred's bill would authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to select a site and purchase it and to arrange for the erection of suitable buildings in which study, investigation, and research work in human diseases could be suitably carried out.

Arrangements would be made whereby fellowships could be established, and any individual scientists given such fellowships would be appointed for duty in the Institute and would be accorded the facilities of the Hygienic Laboratory.

Science News-Letter, January 19, 1929