



Section 3: Tool

How to Recognize Signs and Symptoms of Influenza in the Elderly When the Virus is Circulating in the Community

How to Recognize Signs and Symptoms of Influenza in the Elderly When the Virus is Circulating in the Community^{1,2}

Signs and Symptoms	
Sudden Onset*	Often with confusion
Fever*	Occurs in approximately 70% of patients, <u>but absent in approximately 30%, especially elderly patients.</u>
Dry cough*	Nonproductive, new onset
Headache	Often a key complaint
Fatigue/tiredness	Very significant, may be sole complaint
Loss of appetite	Common, may be sole complaint
Chills	Common
Body aches	Common
Gait instability	Common
Change in mental status	Common
Sore throat	Uncommon

* Note: The occurrence of the following three symptoms—acute onset, fever, and dry cough—is highly indicative of influenza. Diagnosis of influenza in the elderly is difficult. Signs and symptoms of influenza vary by patient. Please alert your physician if a patient demonstrates any of the above symptoms to confirm a diagnosis of influenza.

References

1. Monto A, Gravenstein S, Elliott M, et al. Clinical signs and symptoms predicting influenza infection. *Arch Intern Med.* 2000;160:3243-3247.
2. Bradley S. Prevention of influenza in long-term-care facilities. *Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol.* 1999;20(9):629-637.