

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

Signs/Symptoms

*Sudden on set:	<u>Often with confusion</u>
*Fever:	Occurs in approximately 70% of patients, but <u>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:	<u>Common, may be sole complaint</u>
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 S, Elliot M, et al. Clinical signs and symptoms predicting influenza infection. *Arch Intern Med.* 2000; 160:3243-3247.
2. Bradley S. Prevention of influenza in a long-term-care facilities. *Infect Control Hosp epidemiol.* 1999;20(9);629-637.

