

Influenza on the rise

- Dr. Jude Jayamaha

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The current predominant outbreak of influenza in the country is influenza B, but influenza A also spreads in a lesser degree, Consultant Medical Virologist, National Influenza Centre, Department of Virology, Medical Research Institute (MRI), Dr. Jude Jayamaha told the Daily News yesterday.

According to Dr. Jayamaha, the symptoms and treatment is the same as influenza A. There is a peak in influenza circulation from November to February and from April to June each year (bi-modal seasonality) in Sri Lanka. Increased public awareness is required during these periods.



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Dr. Jayamaha talked about the precautions that should be taken in order to prevent influenza. If you are having flu like symptoms, you should stay at home or if your child has the symptoms, they should not be sent to school/preschool/day care etc. The vulnerable groups are chil-

dren younger than two (2) years, adults aged 65 or older, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain medical conditions, such as chronic heart, lung, kidney, liver, blood or metabolic diseases (such as diabetes), or weakened immune systems.

If a person belongs to any of the vulnerable groups mentioned above, and have symptoms, he/she needs to look for fever, cough, runny nose and or difficulty in breathing. He/she must seek medical attention from a qualified practitioner or come to a hospital OPD and consult the medical officer for further evaluation in the early days of the illness. The pregnant mothers should seek medical treat-

ment without any delay on the first day of the fever and respiratory symptoms, he said.

Medical treatment is not essential for ordinary people who are not in any of the above mentioned high risk groups. Influenza infection revolves naturally among most of the infected persons. A very few can develop complications. As mentioned before majority are cured by their own immune system. But very few can develop complications such as pneumonia, different organ failures, which is rare. The patients as well as those who have just recovered from the sickness need adequate rest, plenty of fluids etc, he added.