

# Health Management in Winter —Beware of Influenza Virus and Norovirus!—

In Japan, an epidemic of influenza occurs from December to around March every year. Such symptoms as runny nose, frequent coughing and sore throat might make you suspect a common cold, but in the case of influenza, you are likely to suddenly run a fever of 38°C or higher. In addition to runny nose and coughing, you might also experience whole-body symptoms such as aching joints and muscle pains. While a common cold rarely becomes severe, influenza could increase in severity and develop into such diseases as acute encephalopathy or pneumonia. It is thus defined as an infectious disease under Japanese law. If you catch influenza, it is extremely important that you refrain from going outside to prevent group infection. At the slightest suspicion that you have influenza, seek medical attention as quickly as possible. If you are diagnosed with influenza, take the medicine that is prescribed to you properly, and get plenty of sleep. Also take care to stay hydrated, to prevent dehydration caused by high fever.

During winter, special precautions also need to be taken against norovirus, which causes food poisoning (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pains). Food poisoning could occur not only during summer, but throughout the year, particularly in December and January, when norovirus infections reach peak level. Norovirus symptoms normally subside in a day or two, but since no vaccine exists, and it is apt to become widespread in group lives, it is important not to spread the virus. One route of infection is by eating food contaminated by the virus, so thoroughly heating foods before eating them is an effective way to prevent infection. However, another common route is through the stool and vomit of a norovirus patient. As norovirus is highly infectious, be sure to wear gloves when handling and disposing of a patient's vomit or other body fluids, and wipe the soiled floor with chlorine bleach.

Hand washing is an effective way to prevent influenza and norovirus food poisoning, so always wash your hands thoroughly after an outing, before cooking and before meals.

## 冬の健康管理

～インフルエンザ、ノロウイルスに注意！～

日本では、毎年12月から3月頃にかけてインフルエンザが流行します。鼻水や咳の回数が増えたり、喉の痛み等の症状が出てくると「風邪かな？」と考えますが、インフルエンザの場合、急に38°C以上の高熱が出たりします。また鼻水や咳に加えて「関節・筋肉痛」の全身症状が出てきます。風邪が重症化することは稀ですが、インフルエンザは急性脳症や肺炎等、重症化する可能性があり、日本の法律では「感染症」と定められています。感染した場合は外出を控えて集団感染を予防することが重要です。インフルエンザに罹ったことが疑われる場合は、早めに病院で診察を受けましょう。罹ってしまったら、病院で処方された薬を正しく服用し、十分に睡眠をとりましょう。高熱による脱水症状に注意し、水分補給を心がけましょう。

冬は食中毒（吐き気、嘔吐、下痢、腹痛）を引き起こすの、ろういるす、ちゅうい、ひつよう、しよくちゅうどく、なつぽノロウイルスにも注意が必要です。食中毒は夏場だけではなく1年中発生し、特にノロウイルスのピークは12月、1月です。通常1～2日で症状は治まりますが、ワクチン等ではなく、集団生活では蔓延しやすいので感染を広げないことが重要です。感染経路の1つはウイルスに汚染されている食品の摂取ですので、食品を十分に加熱することも有効ですが、他に患者の便や吐いた物からの感染が多くを占めます。感染力が強いので、患者の吐いた物等を片付ける時は必ず手袋を着用し、床などに付いた場合は塩素系漂白剤で拭きます。

インフルエンザもノロウイルス食中毒も、予防として手洗いが有効です。外出後や調理前、食事前にはよく手を洗いましょう。