

Definition of influenza

influenza

[in"flou-en'z?]

Acute viral infection of the respiratory tract. From Latin *influentia*, "to flow into"; in medieval times, intangible fluid given off by stars was believed to affect humans. The Italian *influenza* referred to any disease outbreak thought to be influenced by stars. In 1743, what Italians called *an influenza di catarro* ("epidemic of catarrh") spread across Europe, and the disease came to be known in English as simply "influenza."

REFERENCES

1. Emerg Infect Dis, Jan 2006;12:179.
2. <http://www.worldwidewords.org/topicalwords/tw-inf1.htm>