

WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU GET THE FLU



Influenza (the flu) and the common cold are different illnesses that may share some of the same symptoms. The flu is much more serious than a cold, however. It can lead to extended absences from you, hospitalization, and in severe cases, death. If you are unsure which illness you have, call your doctor when symptoms appear.

“I’m sneezing a lot, my nose is stuffed up, and my throat feels sore.

Do I have the flu?” These symptoms sound more like a cold, but you may have the flu if the following symptoms are also present:

- *Fever above 100° F
- *Extreme exhaustion
- *Chills/sweats
- *Harsh, dry, painful cough
- *Persistent headache
- *General muscle and joint aches and pains

In ***CHILDREN***, the following symptoms may signal the flu:

- *Fever
- *Sore Throat
- *Diarrhea
- *Vomiting
- *Nasal congestion

In ***OLDER PEOPLE***, the following symptoms may accompany the flu:

- *Fever above 99°
- *Nasal blockage
- *Confusion
- *Weariness
- *Weakness



Allergies may also cause some symptoms like those of the common cold including sneezing, nasal congestion, watery eyes, and itchy throat or nose. In all cases, call your doctor for an accurate diagnosis and early treatment.

“I think I have the flu. Can I get an antibiotic?” The flu is viral. Since antibiotics are only effective for treating bacterial infections, they will not help you get rid of the flu, nor will they help you get rid of the common cold. The only time you would need an antibiotic is if your flu is accompanied or followed by bronchitis or pneumonia. An antiviral like ***Tamiflu™*** can be taken if started within 24 hours of onset of illness. With the H1N1 virus this appears only to be necessary for younger individuals or those with serious other medical problems.

“What should I take for relief of my flu symptoms?” There are many medications for the relief of flu symptoms, such as acetaminophen for aches and pains, but you might need a prescription cough medicine for the best relief. Do not use aspirin as it can cause complications. It is associated with the risk of Reye’s syndrome in children, a rare, potentially fatal disease marked by swelling of the brain. Fortunately, there are prescription medications that reduce the duration and severity of symptoms if taken within the first 48 hours after symptoms appear. Anti-flu medications are ***NOT*** effective treatment for colds.

“What if my flu symptoms don’t go away in a few days?” Most flu symptoms subside within a few days. But an overall feeling of weakness or fatigue may last up to 2 or 3 weeks. However, if you develop chills and fever, or have blood tinged sputum, call us, especially if you have a chronic condition such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or cardiovascular disease that may complicate recovery. Bronchitis, wheezing, and viral and bacterial pneumonia are some consequences of the flu that must be treated. In elderly people who also have chronic cardiovascular and lung disease, diabetes, kidney disorders, anemia, and weakened immune systems, complications of the flu include bronchitis, wheezing, croup, and pneumonia.

“How can I avoid getting flu again?”

You can prevent the flu by getting the vaccine every year. Since each year brings a new strain of the flu virus, receiving an annual vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your family. The vaccine will ***NOT*** cause you to get the flu.



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