



The Flu and The Common Cold

The flu

Influenza, often called the flu, is a highly contagious viral disease that infects the nose, throat and lungs. The flu typically will last 7 to 10 days and makes a person feel weak and fatigued. The key to identifying the flu is the sudden onset of symptoms (typically within a few hours), including:

- fever
- headache
- extreme tiredness
- dry cough
- sore throat
- muscle aches
- stuffy or runny nose

Children can also develop stomach symptoms (nausea, vomiting and diarrhea), but this is rare.

Flu treatment

Getting a flu shot every year is key to preventing the spread of the flu. Contact your health-care provider within 24 hours of experiencing any flu-like symptoms. This will allow your provider to prescribe an anti-viral medication.

Illness prevention

- Get a flu shot every year.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with hot, soapy water. Use hand sanitizer when you cannot wash your hands.
- Provide alcohol-based wipes and hand sanitizers in community areas.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your elbow. Do not cough or sneeze into your hands.

The common cold

The common cold is highly contagious, and affects the throat, nose and ears (thus the name "head cold"). It can be caused by over 200 viruses, but is most often caused by the rhinovirus. Cold symptoms are typically less severe than flu symptoms, and develop over a few days. Symptoms include:

- sore throat
- stuffy or runny nose
- sneezing
- coughing
- watery eyes
- mild headache
- mild body aches

Cold treatment

Because the cold is caused by a virus, antibiotics do not treat it. Medications can be taken to treat symptoms, such as headache reducers and cough suppressants.

What if I am already sick?

- Stay home from work or school.
- Contact your health-care provider if you have a fever over 100.4°, symptoms lasting more than 10 days, or symptoms not relieved by over-the-counter medications.
- Drink plenty of liquids to stay hydrated.
- Follow your health-care provider's advice.