



# PROHEALTHY

Education for our patients and families

## Flu: Seasonal Influenza

### What is Seasonal Influenza (or the Flu)?

Influenza (also called Flu) is a viral infection of the nose, throat and air passages. Outbreaks of flu occur almost every year, usually in late fall and winter.

Flu viruses cause more severe symptoms and can cause more severe medical problems than cold viruses. Older adults, people whose immune systems are weak, and people with chronic medical problems are particularly at risk for more severe flu symptoms or complications.

Antibiotic medications do not cure the flu or other viruses. All you can do is try to relieve your symptoms.

### Symptoms

- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Fever
- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Cough
- Sore throat

### Treatment

- Rest as much as you can until you feel better
- Drink plenty of fluids to help thin the mucus. This will help to clear your chest, sinuses and ears. Drink until your urine is a pale yellow color, at least 8 ounces of water or juice every hour while you are awake. A fever will increase your need for fluid even more
- Use a cool mist vaporizer in the bedroom to add moisture to the air.
- Take Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin) as directed if needed for fever or body aches. A lot of medicine you can buy also contains acetaminophen. Be sure to read all medication labels carefully so that you don't take too much.
- DO NOT use Aspirin



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- There are medicines your healthcare provider can prescribe that can make flu symptoms less severe. They may also help the symptoms not last as long. These medicines must be started within the first 48 hours of illness to be effective.
- Flu symptoms usually last 3-7 days. They often start improving gradually after the first 2 days or so.
- Infection with the flu virus may lead to other infections, such as ear, sinus and bronchial infections such as pneumonia

## Prevention

- Flu shots help prevent the flu. You need to get a flu shot each year because the flu virus strain varies from year to year.
- The flu virus is almost always spread from person to person by droplets that are coughed or sneezed into the air, so always cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Contain the sneeze or cough in a tissue or handkerchief. Wash hands after handling used tissues.
- The flu virus can also be spread by the hands of an infected person who has touched their mouth or nose, so frequent and careful hand washing will help prevent the spread.

## When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor right away if you develop any of the following:

- your temperature is greater than 104 degrees F after treating the fever
- any new symptoms develop
- medications will not stay down
- difficulty breathing develops or you feel short of breath
- you have a severe headache not relieved by Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen
- you develop an ear ache
- you develop a sharp pain in your chest when you cough
- you feel dizzy or confused
- if your urine looks dark



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## Is it a Cold or the Flu?

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Characteristic, usually 102 or higher and can last for 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General aches and pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue; weakness	Mild	Can last 2-3 weeks
Extreme exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Usual	Sometimes
Chest discomfort; severe cough	Mild to moderate	Can become hacking cough

09/28/09 Approved by PHC Infection Control Department

Please call your doctor for any questions or concerns you may have regarding this information.



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