

News from the Nurse



Flu Prevention

To help prevent any illness, eat right, get enough sleep, exercise regularly and wash your hands often. In the case of influenza, you can also protect yourself by getting a flu vaccine each fall. Flu vaccinations need to be updated every year because the strains of viruses that cause the disease change frequently. In addition, if you're at high risk, try to avoid crowds when flu season is at its peak.

The best time to be immunized is in October or November. This allows your immunity to peak during the height of the influenza season, which is generally December through March. It takes one to two weeks after you've been vaccinated for the shot to take effect. The flu vaccine isn't foolproof. Its effectiveness varies based on the length and intensity of each flu season and the health of each person vaccinated. Because the strains used in the vaccine are chosen nine months before a particular flu season, there's a slight chance the strains may change before the flu season actually starts. All of these factors make the degree to which the vaccine works difficult to measure.

You may worry about contracting flu from the shot. But the injected vaccine is made from an inactivated form of the virus, so you can't get the flu from a flu shot. In some cases, however, you may have a slight reaction to the shot, such as soreness at the injection site, mild muscle aches or fever beginning six to 12 hours after you've been immunized. If you are allergic to eggs, you probably shouldn't have a flu shot. Because the viruses are grown in chicken eggs and you may have an allergic reaction. If you're pregnant, wait until after your first trimester to be immunized, unless your doctor advises you otherwise.

10 Tips to Prevent Cold and Flu

1. Wash your hands- most cold and flu viruses are spread by direct contact
2. Don't cover your sneezes and coughs with your hands- use a tissue or cough into your elbow
3. Don't touch your face- cold and flu viruses often enter thru the eyes nose and mouth
4. Drink plenty of fluids- water flushes out your system as it rehydrates
5. Get fresh air- stay out of crowded dry places where germs may be circulating
6. Exercise regularly- helps increase your body's natural virus killing cells
7. Eat healthy foods- dark green, red and yellow vegetables and fruits
8. Eat Yogurt- studies have shown that eating 1 cup of lowfat yogurt daily can reduce your susceptibility to colds by 25%.
9. Don't smoke- statistics show that smokers get more severe and frequent colds

10. Relax! – Proteins increase in the bloodstream that protect against cold and flu when you are relaxed

If you get the flu, your doctor will usually make a diagnosis based on your symptoms; however the doctor may take a nose or throat swab to test for the flu. To get better, the best [things that you can do](#) are:

- rest in bed or on the couch
- drink lots of liquids, like water or juice
- Take medicine like acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) for your fever, aches, and pains. **DO NOT TAKE ASPIRIN** because it can cause a rare but serious illness in children (usually under 15) called Reye syndrome.

PARENTS: Your doctor may recommend that children need to stay out of school until they are fever free for 24 hours.

PLEASE NOTE: Symptoms may last 1 – 2 weeks. If your child has a cough that persists or fever that returns, he needs to see his doctor.

Is It a Cold or the Flu?

Below are cold symptoms and flu symptoms. See the differences and similarities between a cold and the flu.

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Characteristic, high (100-102 degrees F); lasts 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General Aches, Pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, Weakness	Quite mild	Can last up to 2-3 weeks
Extreme Exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort, Cough	Mild to moderate; hacking cough	Common; can become severe
Complications	Sinus congestion or earache	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can be life-threatening
Prevention	None	Annual vaccination; amantadine

rimantadine or oseltamirvir (antiviral drugs)

Treatment

Only Amantadine, rimantadine, oseltamivir
temporary or zanamavir within 24-48 hours
relief of symptoms after onset of symptoms