

Influenza (Flu) Information

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Signs and Symptoms of the Flu

The flu, caused by a virus, is an illness that can be spread easily. Symptoms range from mild to severe. Every year in the United States 5-20% of the population will get the flu. More than 200,000 individuals will need hospital care; about 36,000 will die from flu-related causes. People at higher risk include people older than 65 years of age, young children, pregnant women and those with existing health conditions. The following symptoms are found with the flu:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Severe tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain
- Stomach problems, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can happen but are more likely in children than adults

More problems such as dehydration, pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections may occur. The flu can also cause existing health problems such as asthma, diabetes and congestive heart failure to get worse. The flu is most easily spread 1 day before symptoms occur and up to 5 days after getting sick.

Online Information and Updates

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

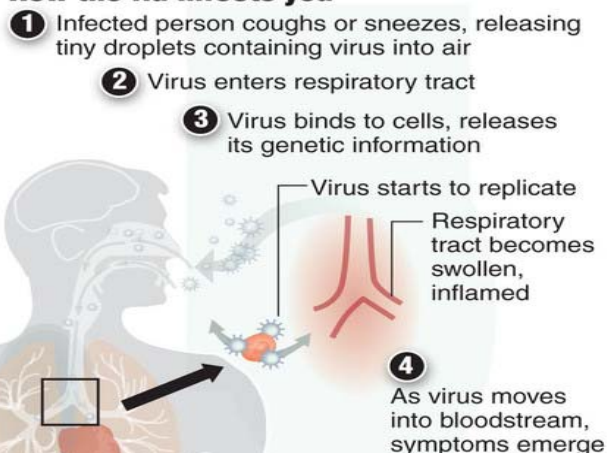
<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>

<http://www.health.state.nm.us/FLU/index.shtml>

Is it the flu, or is it a cold?

Flu is often confused with the common cold, but flu symptoms typically develop more quickly and are more severe than those of a cold.

How the flu infects you



How to compare symptoms

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Head	Headache rare	Achy
Nose	Runny, sneezing	Stuffy sometimes
Throat	Sore	Sore sometimes
Chest	Severe or hacking cough	Dry cough; can become severe
Appetite	Normal	Decreased
Muscles	Fine	Achy
Onset	Slow	Sudden
Body temperature	Low or no fever, no chills	High fever (over 102°F), chills
Fatigue	Mild	Severe; can last two to three weeks

Avoiding the Flu

The best way to avoid the flu is to get a flu shot. The Center for Disease Control gives the following ways to help prevent the spread of the flu:

1. WASH YOUR HANDS:
 - a. Using warm, running water and soap, rub your hand together for 20 seconds
 - b. With the water running, hands should be dried with a single-use towel
 - c. The towel should then be used to turn off the water to prevent getting germs back on the hands
2. Stay at home when you are sick:
 - a. Current health advice is to stay home for 24 hours after your fever is gone
 - b. Keep away from others as much as possible
3. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing. Throw away used tissues and wash hands.
4. Avoid close contact with other people.
5. Avoid touching your mouth and nose
6. Good health habits such as eating a healthy diet exercise regularly and manage stress.

Vaccinations

Yearly flu shots should begin as soon as the vaccine is available. Everyone should get a flu shot every year. People with a higher health risk are listed below:

1. Children aged 6 months to 19 years
2. Pregnant women
3. People age 50 and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People in long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications- health care providers and household contacts

For 2009 there will be two kinds of vaccine available:

1. The seasonal 'flu' shot.
2. The H1N1 'flu' shot(s)

Treatments

If you get sick, some ways to feel better are:

1. Staying home from work or school to rest and drink lots of fluids
2. Avoid alcohol and tobacco products
3. Some Over-The-Counter medications can be taken. (NOTE: do not give children aspirin for flu-like symptoms)
If you have questions or concerns, contact your primary care doctor/provider. The New Mexico Department of Health at 505-827-2389 can be called for questions.

Immediate Attention may be needed for the following:

1. Fast breathing or trouble breathing
2. Bluish skin color
3. Not drinking enough fluids
4. Not waking up or not interacting
5. Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
6. Fever with a rash