

Live Well to
Learn Well

Web:
health.cornell.edu

Phone (24/7):
607-255-5155

Fax:
607-255-0269

Appointments:
Monday–Saturday

Check web for hours,
services, providers,
and appointment
information

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14853-3101

Did you know that communities, as well as individuals, get the flu? Your own flu prevention strategies will not only serve you, but also help limit the spread of influenza viruses to others.

What is the flu?

Flu is a contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract (nose, throat, bronchial tubes, and lungs). It usually comes on fast and can cause a wide range of symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also experience diarrhea and vomiting. A case of the flu can vary in severity from mild to severe. If you have a chronic health condition or are pregnant, you may be at higher risk for serious flu-related complications.

What isn't the flu?

It's easy to confuse a common cold with the flu. In general, colds are milder and don't last as long as flu symptoms. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose without a fever. Also, don't confuse influenza with intestinal flu, which is caused by a different virus that creates gastrointestinal problems.

Flu vaccine

Why get vaccinated? Public health officials and primary care providers agree: the most important thing you can do to avoid getting the flu this season (and missing out on a week of whatever you had planned) is to get a flu shot. The CDC recommends everyone (over 6 months) get vaccinated every year to protect against the flu. The vaccine is updated annually to protect against the types and strains of viruses most likely to be in circulation.

Where? Flu vaccine clinics take place across campus each fall, and typically include at least one clinic on North, West, and Central campus. View the clinic schedule at health.cornell.edu/flu.

Once campus clinics have ended, students (and their spouses/partners) may also schedule a flu vaccine appointment at Cornell Health by calling 607-255-5155, or online via myCornellHealth (from health.cornell.edu).

Cost? Flu vaccines are free to all Cornell students, staff, faculty, and retirees (Cornell ID required), plus student spouses/partners on a Cornell student health plan (SHP). The cost for student spouses/partners not on SHP will depend on their insurance coverage.

So you have flu...

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU *
Symptom Onset	Gradual	Abrupt
Fever (over 100.4°F)	Rare	Very common
Aches	Uncommon	Very common
Chills	Uncommon	Fairly common
Fatigue, weakness	Sometimes	Very common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Common	Sometimes
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common
Headache	Rare	Common

* COVID-19 symptoms can look similar to the flu, so test for COVID if you have a flu-like illness. Chart was adapted from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

SIDE EFFECTS? In spite of rumors to the contrary, getting a flu vaccine *does not* give you the flu, and the risk of having a severe reaction to the shot is less than 1 in 4 million. Your arm and/or body may ache for a day or two, but it shouldn't set you back on your studies, work, or fun.

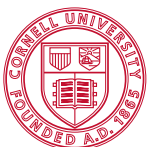
Other key prevention strategies

The flu is highly contagious and spreads by contact with the oral and nasal secretions of others who have been infected.

So please, follow the advice you've heard all your life about what you need to do to stay healthy.

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water (use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when you don't have access to a sink).

- Don't share eating and drinking utensils, lip balms, smoking paraphernalia, etc.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs are spread when a person touches something that is contaminated and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Take care of your immune system by eating well, getting plenty of sleep, engaging in physical activity, and managing stress.



What to do if you have the flu for a flu-like illness

- **Take a COVID-19 test:** Not only can COVID virus cause the same symptoms as the flu, but it can also be present at the same time. Free COVID antigen tests are available at Cornell Health.

- **Rest up.** Sleep is the best thing you can do to heal and recover. Although it may be difficult to arrange in your hectic life, your body needs bed rest for several days to fight off the infection and avoid further complications.

If you don't rest when you're sick with the flu, it will take longer to recover.

- **Treat symptoms.** You may recover more comfortably by taking non-prescription medications to treat symptoms, including ibuprofen or acetaminophen for aches and pains; lozenges for a sore throat; decongestants for a runny nose. Do NOT take aspirin or aspirin-containing medicines due to the risk of Reye's Syndrome in young people. When in doubt, call Cornell Health and consult with a nurse.

Note: Antibiotic treatment is *not effective for the flu*, as influenza is caused by a virus, not bacteria.

- **Drink up.** The fever that often accompanies the flu causes your body to use more fluid than usual. As a result, you can become dehydrated, which will increase fever. To avoid dehydration, drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water, broth, herbal tea, Gatorade, or another non-caffeinated carbonated beverage daily while you're sick with the flu.

- **Take in adequate nutrition.** Your immune system needs the support of adequate nutrition to recover well (soups, juices, applesauce, and other bland foods may be most comfortable).

- **Monitor your temperature.** You are most contagious when you have a fever. Wait to be fever-free for at least 24 hours (without medicine) before resuming class and activities.

Protect others when ill

- Keep a distance (6 feet) from others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing to keep those around you from getting your germs.
- Stay home from class, and away from work, social gatherings, errands, and non-essential activity until you are fever-free.

When to get medical help

Call Cornell Health (24/7) at 607-255-5155 if your symptoms worsen or complications develop, including:

- Difficulty breathing
- Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- Dizziness
- Confusion or change in level of consciousness
- Persistent vomiting
- Difficulty swallowing
- Rash
- Symptoms improve but then return or worsen
- Fever of over 100°F lasting for more than three days, or a fever above 103°F

Antiviral therapy

Antiviral drugs are offered by prescription only and should be used early to treat flu in people who are very sick and those who have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications.

Most healthy people with flu do not need antiviral therapy to recover. If you think you might benefit from antiviral therapy, call Cornell Health to discuss your options. Antiviral medications are most effective when taken in the first 24 to 48 hours of illness.

People at Greater Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications:

- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, including (but not limited to):
 - asthma
 - diabetes
 - immune suppression
 - heart, lung, kidney, or liver disease
- Children under 5, but especially those younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant people