Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. It typically resolves within two weeks without treatment from a medical provider.

This viral illness tends to come on quickly with its most severe symptoms lasting 3-4 days. While in most cases people feel better after two weeks, the use of non-prescription medications can greatly reduce symptoms.

**Symptoms**
- Sudden/rapid onset
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fever or feeling feverish with chills
- Dry and persistent cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea

**Self-care measures**
- Rest as much as possible.
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.
- Use saline nose drops to loosen mucus.
- Use Ibuprofen (Advil®) or Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to reduce fever/discomfort according to package instructions. Do NOT take aspirin.
- Use oral decongestants (Phenylephrine/Pseudoephedrine) for short-term relief of nasal congestion.
- Use nasal decongestant (Oxymetazoline) for short-term relief of nasal congestion (do not use for more than 3 days). If you take stimulant medications and/or have a history of significant anxiety/depression, check with a pharmacist before using this medicine.

(over)
• Gargle with warm salt water and use throat sprays/lozenges (containing Benzocaine) for throat pain.
• Use heated, humidified air (if you do not have a humidifier try taking a hot shower).
• **Special Note:** Antiviral medication (Tamiflu®) is recommended only for those with serious underlying medical conditions who are at risk for severe complications (e.g., those who are pregnant, immunocompromised, have chronic medical conditions, or are morbidly obese).

### Preventing spread to others
- Getting the flu vaccine annually is the best prevention.
- If already sick, stay home and away from others (no classes, sports, group meetings, etc.).
- Wait for temperature to become less than 100°F (without medication) for more than 24-hours before resuming classes, etc.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Contain coughs and sneezes using the crook of your elbow.
- Don’t share cups or other personal items.

### When to seek medical care
- If you are at high risk for complications (e.g., if you are pregnant, immunocompromised, have chronic medical conditions, or are morbidly obese).
- Fever over 102°F for more than 3 days
- Symptoms that last over 10 days and get worse instead of better
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion or disorientation
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Pain/pressure in your chest
- Severe sinus pain
- Very swollen glands in the neck or jaw

To make an appointment at Cornell Health, call 607-255-5155 during business hours, or go to myCornellHealth (from health.cornell.edu) and find a time that works for you.

### Other resources
- [health.cornell.edu/flu](http://health.cornell.edu/flu)
- [cdc.gov/flus](http://cdc.gov/flus)