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
- cdc.gov/flu