

# UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

University of Maryland, College Park



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[www.health.umd.edu](http://www.health.umd.edu)

## Influenza (Flu)

Influenza is a common illness affecting many people every winter. The term "flu" is often used incorrectly. There are three types of influenza viruses. Inhaling infected droplets from the air spreads the virus from person to person. New strains of Type A and B viruses develop regularly and result in new epidemics every few years. Type C causes either a very mild respiratory illness or no symptoms at all. Immunity to one type of influenza virus does not produce immunity to the other types. Although the optimal time to vaccinate against influenza is October and November, vaccination in December and later continues to be strongly recommended. The vaccine needs to be given yearly to be effective.

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms last three days to a week, though weakness and fatigue may persist for some time. Symptoms of the flu include one or more of the following:

- . Chills and Fever
- . Headache
- . Muscle aches and Stiffness
- . Cough with or without mucous
- . Fatigue
- . Loss of appetite
- . Sore throat

### TREATMENT

Treatment of the flu is aimed at reducing symptoms. ANTIBIOTICS ARE OF NO VALUE unless the flu becomes complicated by a secondary bacterial infection. Vaccination is the most important way to prevent influenza. Antiviral drugs are not a substitute for influenza vaccination. Antivirals should be administered within two days of the beginning of illness to reduce the severity and duration of symptoms.

### You can help your body overcome the flu by following these steps:

1. Rest- limit your physical activity, rest when you feel tired.
2. Fluids- drink at least six glasses of fluids daily. Increased fluid intake thins body secretions and promotes drainage from your nasal and chest passages.
3. Try to eat well balanced meals. If you are unable to eat solid foods, try broth, chicken soup, toast, crackers, Gatorade, Popsicles, rice, etc. Avoid spicy foods like pizza and tacos. Avoid fried foods.
4. Increase humidity- inhaling warm moist air soothes inflamed mucous membranes.
5. Take Tylenol or Advil for fever, headache and muscle aches.
6. Take Sudafed 30 mg. (two tablets) 3 or 4 times daily to help relieve nasal congestion.

**SEE A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IF SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU DO NOT IMPROVE AFTER 7 TO 10 DAYS, IF COUGH BECOMES PRODUCTIVE WITH BROWN OR GREEN SPUTUM, OR IF BREATHING DIFFICULTY DEVELOPS.**

For more information on influenza visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluvirus.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluvirus.htm)

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