

Influenza

What Is the Flu?

- The influenza virus causes the flu.
- The flu can make you feel tired or run down and can give you a fever, sore throat, headache, runny or stuffy nose, cough, muscle aches, diarrhea, and vomiting.
- The flu virus spreads from person to person through droplets from coughing, spitting, sneezing, or shouting or singing.
- It takes about 2 days to start feeling sick.
- You can spread the flu to others for about a week after you start feeling sick.
- You can limit the chance of spreading the flu by:
 - Washing your hands often with soap/water or hand sanitizer.
 - Coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow.
 - Wearing a mask when you are sick and around other people.
 - Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
 - Staying home from work, school, or daycare, if possible.
- Getting a flu vaccine (a flu shot) every year is the best way to prevent the flu. You can sometimes still get the flu even if with the flu shot, but your illness will be less severe.



What Should I Do To Feel Better?

- Antiviral medicines can reduce flu symptoms. These work best if taken within 48 hours.
- Ask your healthcare provider what to do. They may tell you to—
 - Take ibuprofen (commonly called Advil® or Motrin®) or acetaminophen (commonly called Tylenol®). Store brands are just as good as name brands.
 - Get plenty of rest, drink lots of water or other liquids, and avoid smoking.
 - Soothe a sore throat by gargling with warm water, taking cough drops (age at least 6 years) or ½–1 teaspoon of honey every 2 hours (not for children younger than 1 year), or drinking warm tea.

What Is the Role of Antibiotics?

- Antibiotics do not help the flu. Antibiotics only kill bacteria, and bacteria do not cause the flu. If you use antibiotics to treat the flu, you will still feel sick, and the antibiotic may give you a skin rash, diarrhea, or a yeast infection.
 - Antibiotics should only be taken during the flu if your healthcare provider is concerned that you may also have a bacterial infection.

When Will I Feel Better?

- Most people feel sick from the flu for a week or more.

When Should I Contact My Clinician?

- See a clinician immediately if—
 - You do not feel better after 10 days.
 - You have a new fever, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, dizziness, confusion, or severe or persistent vomiting.

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