

## Is It a Cold or the Flu?

This chart can help you determine if you have a cold or the flu. However, it is important to remember symptoms of both illnesses can be the same.

A laboratory test is the only reliable way to determine if you have the flu.

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Characteristic, high (102 ° - 104°F); lasts 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General Aches/Pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, Weakness	Quite Mild	Can last 2-3 weeks
Extreme Exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort, Cough	Mild to moderate; hacking cough	Common; can become severe
Complications	Sinus congestion or earache	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can become life-threatening
Prevention	No vaccine or medication can prevent a cold	Annual vaccination; antiviral medicines (see your doctor)
	Wash hands frequently. Cover cough or sneeze with tissue. Avoid contact with others if you are sick.	
Treatment	Temporary relief of symptoms	Antiviral medicines (see your doctor)



For more information about influenza... Ask your healthcare provider or local health department



Ohio Department of Health  
Immunization Program  
246 N. High St  
Columbus, OH 43215  
1-800-282-0546  
1-614-466-4643

Email: [Immunize@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:Immunize@odh.ohio.gov)

### Resources:

#### CDC:

[http://www.cdc.gov/flu/other\\_flu.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/other_flu.htm)

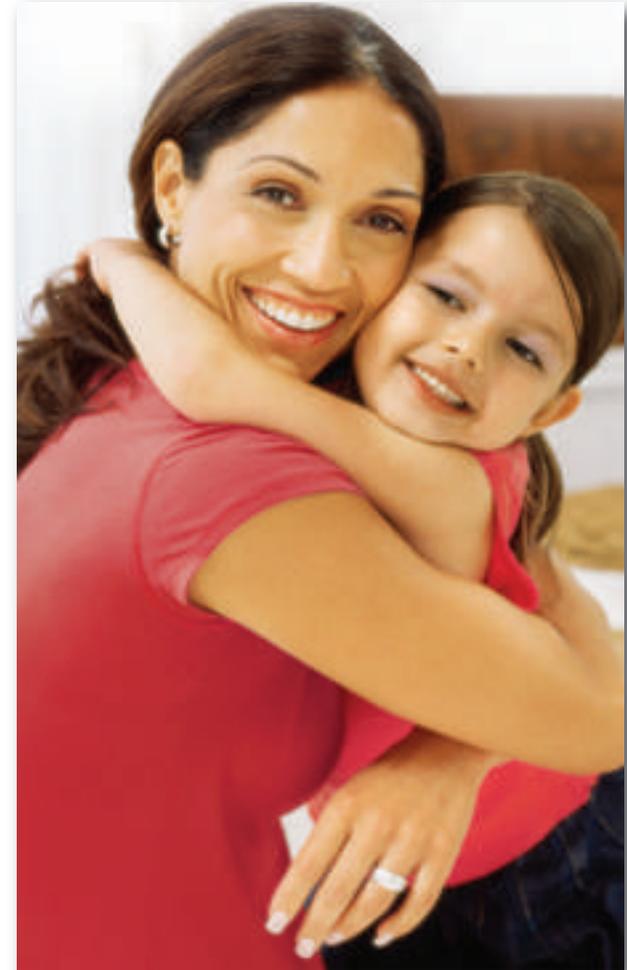
<http://www.flu.gov/>

#### Ohio Department of Health:

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/>

ODH 3947.11 (New 11/10)

Protect yourself and the ones you love



Get the Flu Shot!

## What is influenza?

Influenza –commonly called the “flu” – is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Each year it is estimated that an average of 36,000 Americans die and more than 200,000 are hospitalized from flu-related illnesses.



## Who should be vaccinated?

In 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended that everyone over 6 months old should get an influenza vaccine. Although most healthy people recover from the flu without complications, older persons, young children, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions may have serious complications from the flu.

Persons at greatest risk for medical complications include:

- All children under 5 years old
- All persons 50 years old and older
- Children and adults who have chronic lung (including asthma) or heart/circulatory (except isolated hypertension), kidney, liver, neurological, blood or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus)
- Persons who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or HIV)
- Women who are or will be pregnant during flu season
- Children and adolescents (aged 6 months – 18

years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection

- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- American Indians/Alaska natives
- Persons who are morbidly obese (BMI≥40)

To protect others at greatest risk for complications the following should receive an influenza vaccine:

- Health care providers
- Household contacts and caregivers of children under 5 years and adults over 50 years old, with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children under 6 months of age
- Household contacts and caregivers of persons with medical conditions that put them at higher risk for severe complication from the flu

These individuals may be encouraged to get the flu vaccine first if there is a shortage of vaccine.

## How does the flu spread?

The flu spreads in respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. It usually spreads from person to person, though someone may become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose. It is possible to infect others one day before getting symptoms or feeling sick and up to seven days after becoming sick. So you can give someone the flu before you even know that you are sick.

## How can the flu be prevented?

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu shot every year. However there are other measures that can be taken to help prevent the spread of influenza even after receiving the vaccine.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water—especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your nose and mouth whenever you cough or sneeze. If you use a tissue, throw it away after one use and wash your hands.

- Stay away from people who are sick.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work or school. Avoid contact with other people so you don’t make them sick too.
- You should be fever free for 24 hours without the using of fever reducing medications before returning to work or school.
- Keep your hands away from your face. The flu can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth.
- Take flu antiviral drugs until gone if they are prescribed by your doctor.

## Will the vaccine make me sick?

No. The vaccine is very safe and does not make you sick. The viruses in the flu vaccines are either killed (inactivated flu shot) or weakened (attenuated nasal-spray), so you cannot get the flu from the vaccine. Some people get a little swelling and soreness where they get the shot. This usually goes away in about a day or two. The live attenuated nasal mist vaccine (LAIV) is available to individuals between the ages of 2 through 49 years of age who have no underlying health conditions. Ask your healthcare provider for more information.

## What should I do if I get the flu?

If you do get the flu:

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Get lots of rest
- Avoid using alcohol and tobacco

In most cases, it is OK to take medications to relieve symptoms. However, you should **never** give aspirin to children or teenagers with flu-like symptoms – particularly if they have a fever.

In addition, if you develop flu-like symptoms and are at high risk for complications, call your healthcare provider. Your doctor may recommend use of an antiviral medication which must be started within two days of illness, so you should seek medical treatment early.