

What is a Cold? What is the Flu?

Cold and Flu are both contagious diseases caused by viral infections. They share many symptoms in common, but there are also differences. Flu symptoms come on more suddenly, are more severe and often come with a fever. Cold symptoms are milder and start slowly, usually with 1-2 days of sore throat or a runny nose. In some people, the flu can turn into a severe illness, but most people who get the flu recover in 1-2 weeks. The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall.



Who is at High Risk for Complications From the Flu?

- People over 65 years of age
- Pregnant women
- Children from 6 months to 23 months of age
- People who have chronic medical conditions

Symptoms

Flu symptoms often come on suddenly and may include:

- **Fever**
- **Headache**
- **Extreme tiredness/weakness**
- **Dry cough**
- **Sore throat**
- **Runny nose**
- **Body and/or muscle aches**
- **Diarrhea and throwing up**
(more common in children)

Treatment

Here are some ways to help your body fight the flu:

- **Get plenty of sleep.**
- **Drink lots of fluids like water.**
- **Don't use alcohol or tobacco.**
- **Take over-the-counter medicines for pain or fever if needed.**

If you are at high risk for complications (see list at left), call your provider as soon as you start feeling flu-like symptoms.

For more information call Customer Service at **(415) 615-4555**.
Or visit www.healthysanfrancisco.org

Emergency “Warning” Signs

The following flu-symptoms require urgent medical attention:

- **In Children**
 - **High fever that lasts more than 3 days**
 - **Fast breathing or trouble breathing**
 - **Bluish skin color**
 - **Refusing water**
- **In Adults**
 - **High fever that lasts more than 3 days**
 - **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
 - **Pain or pressure in the chest**
 - **Fainting or near-fainting**
 - **Confusion**
 - **Constant throwing up**

Seek *immediate* medical attention if you notice the following:

- Changes in a child’s mental state
 - Not waking up
 - Not interacting
 - Extreme fussiness and not wanting to be held
- Seizures
- Any of the symptoms above getting worse
- Other unusual or severe symptoms



Preventing the Flu

The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall. Other ways to keep yourself and others healthy:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay at home from work, school, or errands if you are sick.
- Cover your mouth or nose with a tissue when you cough, or cough into your elbow. Do not cough into your hands!
- Wash your hands often and very well.
- Don’t touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Adapted from:

Influenza Tutorial, Patient Education Institute via National Library of Medicine

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/influenza/id439102.pdf

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