Flu Symptoms
When to Seek Medical Care

This information is provided by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for Veterans, their families, friends, volunteers, and employees. It describes common symptoms of influenza (flu) and how to decide when to stay at home or when to seek medical care.

Common Flu Symptoms

- Fever (100° F or higher)
- Body or muscle aches
- Headache
- Feeling tired or weak
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Stomach symptoms (mostly in children)

If You Have Common Flu Symptoms

- Stay home
- Rest
- Drink fluids
- Take medicines for fever such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil® or Motrin®)
- Call your healthcare team within 48 hours for advice about what to do next
  - Antiviral medicines may reduce flu symptoms if started within 48 hours of your first symptoms

WARNING!
Moderate or severe flu symptoms are signs of complications from flu!

When to Seek Medical Care

Call your healthcare team within 48 hours:

- If you have common flu symptoms or
- If you have moderate flu symptoms:
  - Not able to drink enough fluids
    - Dark urine or feeling dizzy when standing are signs that you are not drinking enough fluids
  - Fever of 100° F or higher for 3 or more days
  - Feel better, and then get a fever or sore throat again

Go right away for medical care:

- If you have severe flu symptoms:
  - Shortness of breath or wheezing
  - Coughing up blood
  - Pain or pressure in your chest when breathing
  - Chest pain, especially if you have heart disease like angina or congestive heart failure
  - Trouble with balance, walking or sitting up, or becoming confused

Stop the Spread of Flu

- Get a flu shot
- Stay home when sick
- Clean your hands
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
# Flu vs. Cold: Know the Difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Flu</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>Usual - 100° F or higher</td>
<td>Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chills</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body or muscle aches</td>
<td>Common – can be severe</td>
<td>Uncommon or mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Common – can be severe</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling tired and weak</td>
<td>Common – can be severe</td>
<td>Sometimes – usually mild: you don’t feel tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Common – can last 2-3 weeks</td>
<td>Common – mild to moderate hacking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneezing</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runny or stuffy nose</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest discomfort</td>
<td>Common – can be severe</td>
<td>Sometimes – can be mild to moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Brand names included in this information are provided as examples only. Their inclusion does not mean that these products are endorsed by VA or any other Government agency. Also if a particular brand name is not mentioned, this does not mean or imply that the product is unsatisfactory.

Everyone, including the sick person, should clean their hands often and cover their coughs and sneezes.

**WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?**

- [www.publichealth.va.gov/flu](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu)
- [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)
- [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

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