

FactSheet

When to Seek Medical Care for Influenza

Most healthy people do not need to see a doctor for the flu. The illness usually goes away in about seven to 10 days. Although you may feel quite sick, home treatment is usually all that is needed.

Children and adults who are ill and at high risk for flu complications and people with more severe flu symptoms should call their primary health care provider or go to an urgent care clinic/emergency room if they cannot reach their health care provider.

Whenever possible, call your health care provider to get advice on whether you need to be seen. Do not go to an emergency room unless you have severe symptoms or a chronic condition that puts you at higher risk for flu complications and you cannot contact your health care provider.

You should see a doctor if:

- An infant under 3 months old has a fever of 100.4° F or higher.
- A child 3 months to 3 years has a fever of 104° F or higher that does not come down after four to six hours of home treatment.
- A person 4 years or older has a fever of 104° F or higher that does not come down after two hours of home treatment.
- Your fever does not begin to go down after three to five days.

- You have a fever that goes away and then returns. (You could have a bacterial infection.)
- You or your child also has shortness of breath or other breathing problems.
- You or your child has a fever and a severe headache or stiff neck, or seems confused or hard to wake.
- A child who is ill and is not eating, taking fluids, or stops urinating, which can signify dehydration.

General advice if you think you have the flu:

- If you are sick with the flu, you may be ill for a week or longer. Stay home, unless you need medical care or other necessities, so you can get better and prevent others from getting ill. Drink plenty of fluids and rest as much as possible. Avoid travel.
- Do not go to work or school until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine like acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil).
- If you leave the house to seek medical care, wear a facemask.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap or use a hand sanitizer.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- In general, avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness, especially those with one of the high-risk chronic conditions.

(continued)

Testing and Treatment

Testing and treatment is not needed or recommended for most children and adults who get the flu. Antiviral medication is not currently recommended except for people with the flu who are at higher risk for complications or have severe illness.

- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worsened cough

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worsened cough

Warning Signs Requiring Urgent Medical Attention

In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color (call 911 immediately)
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting



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