

Understanding Influenza

| | Seasonal Flu | Common Cold |
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| What is it? | <p>Influenza, or the flu, is a common and highly contagious, infectious respiratory disease that affects the nose, throat and lungs.</p> <p>Influenza viruses can change rapidly. That's why there is a new flu shot made every year to protect against the circulating virus strains.</p> | <p>A cold is a mild infection of the nose and throat caused by a variety of viruses.</p> <p>Although a cold might linger, the symptoms remain mild.</p> |
| Symptoms | <p>Almost always</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sudden onset of cough and fever <p>Common</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatigue Muscle aches Sore throat Headache Decreased appetite Runny nose <p>Sometimes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nausea Vomiting Diarrhea | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Runny nose Sneezing Cough Sore throat |

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Severity Indicators

If you develop the following symptoms, you need to see a health care provider right away:

- Shortness of breath, rapid or difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Bluish or grey skin color
- Bloody or coloured mucus/spit
- Sudden dizziness or confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- High fever lasting more than three days
- Low blood pressure

Additional symptoms to watch for in children:

- Not drinking enough fluids or eating
- Not waking up or interacting
- Irritability; not wanting to play or be held

People at Risk of Complications

The following groups are not more likely to get the flu. However, they are more at risk of developing complications if they do get sick:

- Children under five years of age (especially those less than two years old)
- Women who are pregnant
- People with chronic conditions such as:
 - Heart disease
 - Liver disease
 - Kidney disease
 - Blood disorders
 - Diabetes
 - Severe obesity
 - Asthma and chronic lung disease
 - Immunosuppressed (people taking cancer drugs or people with HIV/AIDS)
 - Neurological disorders
- Aboriginal people

IMPORTANT If you have flu symptoms and you have one of these risk factors, contact a health care provider as soon as possible — antiviral medications may be needed.

To find out more, visit www.fightflu.ca or call 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232) (TTY 1-800-926-9105)



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