



# Accomplished Health & Wellness

## Patient Handout

Influenza (TheFlu) · Reviewed October 2026

### WHAT IS THE FLU?

Influenza ("the flu") is a respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. It tends to spread in fall and winter and usually starts about 3 weeks after Thanksgiving. Unlike a common cold, the flu often comes on suddenly and makes you feel really bad all over. Most healthy people recover in 1-2 two weeks with rest and fluids.



### Common Symptoms

- Fever or feeling feverish, chills
- Body aches and headache
- Dry cough and sore throat
- Extreme tiredness
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Children may also have vomiting or diarrhea

### Care at Home

Most healthy people recover in 1-2 weeks with rest and fluids.

- Rest and stay home until you are fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine.
- Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.
- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) for fever, aches, and headache, as directed on the label.

## Antivirals & When to Call

1. Antiviral medicines (such as oseltamivir/Tamiflu or baloxavir/Xofluza) can shorten the illness and lower the risk of complications.
  - They work best when started within 2 days (48 hours) of your first symptoms.
2. Antibiotics do not treat the flu, because it is caused by a virus, not bacteria.
3. Prevent the flu:
  - Get a flu vaccine every year if you are 6 months or older and have no medical reason not to.
  - Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer, cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow, and stay home when possible while you are sick

## COMPARE



# Cold, Flu, or Allergies?

These illnesses share many symptoms. Here is how to distinguish the 3:

- Allergies do not cause fever.
- The flu tends to come on suddenly with a high fever and makes you feel worse all over.
- A cold worsens slowly with little to no fever.
- Use this guide to decide when to manage at home and when to schedule a visit.

| Illness     | Manage at home if                                    | Schedule a visit if                                            |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Allergies   | Itchy eyes, sneezing, clear drainage, no fever       | Wheezing, or over-the-counter options not helping              |
| Common cold | Congestion, mild sore throat, improving in 7–10 days | Lasting past 10 days, or worsening after improving             |
| Flu         | Fever and aches improving by day 3–4                 | Fever over 3 days, trouble breathing, or a high-risk condition |

## WHEN YOU CONTACT US



Contact your clinic promptly:

- If you are pregnant
- Age 65 or older, a young child
- Have heart disease, lung disease (including asthma), diabetes, or a weakened immune system
- Early antiviral treatment helps most in these groups

## Quick Reference

|                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Book a visit                 | Email "Appointment Request".   |
| Cancel or reschedule         | Email at least 24 hours ahead. |
| Refill a current medication  | Call your pharmacy.            |
| Change or start a medication | Schedule a visit or televisit. |
| Non-urgent quest             | Email "Question".              |



- Call 911 or go to the nearest ER (do not mail or text the office) for:
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pressure or stomach pain
- Ongoing dizziness, confusion, or trouble waking
- seizures
- Not urinating or signs of dehydration
- In children, also watch for fast breathing, bluish lips, no tears when crying, or being unusually sleepy or irritable.

## In an Emergency

This handout is for general education and does not replace advice from your own clinician. If you are unsure about your symptoms, contact your clinic.