

# Influenza (Flu)

- Influenza (Flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus.
- It is not the virus that mainly causes vomiting and diarrhea.
- The illness is self-limited with severe symptoms usually lasting 3-4 days and feeling back to normal within 2 weeks.
- Self-limited infections can be treated without seeing a medical provider.



## Symptoms:

- Sudden/rapid onset of symptoms
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fever or feeling feverish with chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea

## Self-care measures:

- Rest
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids
- Use saline nose drops to loosen mucus
- Use Ibuprofen (Advil®) 600 mg every 6-8 hours or Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) 650 mg every 6 hours as needed to reduce fever/discomfort
- Use Oral Decongestants (Phenylephrine/Pseudoephedrine) for short-term relief of nasal congestion
- Use Nasal Decongestant (Oxymetazoline) for short-term relief of nasal congestion (do not use for more than 3 days)
- Gargle with salt water and use throat sprays/lozenges (containing Benzocaine) for throat pain
- Use heated, humidified air (if you do not have a humidifier try taking a hot shower)
- Special Note: Antiviral medication (Tamiflu®) is only recommended for patients with serious underlying medical conditions who are at risk for severe complications (such as pregnancy, immunocompromised, chronic medical conditions, or morbidly obese).

## Limit spread to others:

- Stay home and away from others until fever-free for more than 24-hours (temperature should be less than 100 degrees Fahrenheit without medication)
- Do not go to class or dining facilities (if you live in a residence hall call 540-568-6949 for dining options)
- Wash hands frequently
- Contain coughs and sneezes using the crook of your elbow
- Getting the flu vaccine is the best prevention

## When to seek care from a medical provider:

- If you are at high risk for complications (such as pregnancy, immunocompromised, chronic medical conditions, or morbidly obese).
- Fever over 102 degrees Fahrenheit that lasts for more than 3 days
- For symptoms that last over 10 days and get worse instead of better
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion or disorientation
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Pain/pressure in your chest
- Severe sinus pain
- Very swollen glands in the neck or jaw

## Other resources:

- [http://www.flu.gov/about\\_the\\_flu/index.html](http://www.flu.gov/about_the_flu/index.html)

UHC self-care guidelines are based on the most recent recommendations of national medical authorities.