



# What are the symptoms of the flu versus the symptoms of a cold?

## IS IT THE FLU OR A COLD?

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS	INFLUENZA	COLD
Symptom onset	Abrupt	Gradual
Fever	Usual	Rare
Aches	Usual	Slight
Chills	Fairly Common	Uncommon
Fatigue, weakness	Usual	Sometimes
Sneezing	Sometimes	Common
Stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common
Chest discomfort, cough	Common	Mild to moderate
Headache	Common	Rare



### I THINK I HAVE THE FLU.

#### What should I do?

- First, check with your primary care provider. Milder cases of the flu are often better treated by a primary care provider or in an urgent care facility than in an emergency department.
- However, some cases of the flu should be treated in an emergency department. Go to an emergency department if you have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest, or are experiencing flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
- If you are not sure if you need to go to the emergency department, contact your primary care provider. He or she will be able to guide you through the next best step for you or your child. (Most offices have physicians on call after hours.)

### I DON'T THINK I HAVE THE FLU.

#### What can I do to prevent it?

The most important step you can take to prevent the flu is to **get a flu vaccination** each year. Also:

- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water to help lower the risk of spreading infection.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched often.



Even if you have had the flu this season or in past seasons, it doesn't mean you won't catch it again. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu shot every year.

