

## **Influenza Update; What is the Flu and what can be done for it?**

A cold and the flu have many of the same symptoms. But a cold is generally mild, while the flu tends to be more severe.

A cold often starts with feeling tired, sneezing, coughing and having a runny nose. You may not have a fever or you may run a low fever--just 1 or 2 degrees higher than usual. You may also have muscle aches, a scratchy or sore throat, watery eyes and a headache. The flu starts suddenly and hits hard. You'll probably feel weak and tired, and have a fever, dry cough, a runny nose, chills, muscle aches, severe headache, eye pain and a sore throat. It usually takes longer to get over the flu than over a cold.

The flu typically causes respiratory system complaints. Problems with the GI tract such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are NOT commonly due to the virus that causes the Flu in humans.

What causes colds and the flu? Viruses. Over 100 different viruses can cause colds.

There aren't as many viruses that cause the flu. That's why there's a shot for the flu and not for colds.

### **What can I do to feel better?**

There's no cure for a cold or the flu. Antibiotics don't work against viruses. All you can do to feel better is treat your symptoms while your body fights off the virus.

Ways to treat your cold/flu symptoms

Stay home and rest, especially while you have a fever, you're contagious and will only infect coworkers at this stage.

Stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke, which can make cold symptoms worse.

Drink plenty of fluids like water, fruit juices and clear soups. Fluids help loosen mucus. Fluids are also important if you have a fever because fever can dry up your body's fluids, which can lead to dehydration.

Don't drink alcohol.

Take HIGH doses of vitamin C! Too much Vitamin C will loosen your bowels, if this happens back the dose off by 20%. I routinely recommend to start with 2-3 1000 mg capsules 3-4 times daily and increase from there if it's tolerated. There have been reports of Avian (bird) Flu being successfully treated with doses of Vitamin C in the range of 100,000 mg daily (this high dose usually requires intravenous doses which are not found in most physician offices).

Gargle with warm salt water a few times a day to relieve a sore throat. Throat sprays or lozenges may also help relieve the pain.

Use salt water nose drops to help loosen mucus and moisten the tender skin in your nose.

### **What can Help the symptoms?**

There are alternative medicine remedies that can help with the flu symptoms.

Echinacea//Zn Lozenges/Vitamin C as high a daily dose as tolerated split to 2-4 doses daily without causing loose bowels, usually several grams (thousand miligrams) daily can help with faster resolution of upper respiratory symptoms. DeImmune is an immune system stimulant available @ NutritionWise in Tequesta that can be quite helpful for these infections.

Vitamin C 1000 mg capsules 2-3 capsules taken 2-3-4 times daily. Too much Vitamin C will loosen bowels/cause gastrointestinal intolerance, if that happens back the dose down to the highest tolerated dose that doesn't cause gastrointestinal problems, split it to twice a day, three times daily, or four times daily for the best results. Reactive scurvy (Vitamin C deficiency) which can cause joint pain/aches/tooth loss etc can occur if sudden high-dose vitamin C is stopped, it needs to be SLOWLY TAPERED over a period of several weeks.

Guinea pigs and people are the only mammals missing the enzyme to make our own Vitamin C. A billy goat makes 10,000 mg/d, how many goats would it take to make up your weight? Multiply that number X 10,000 mg and you'll get an idea of how much you may need!

Pycnogenol and/or Grape seed extract also boost bioflavonoids and help correct this.

No medicine can cure a cold or the flu. Medicine can, however, help relieve some of your cold or flu symptoms. Check with your doctor before giving any medicine to children.

Many cold/flu products are available without a prescription. See the box below for a guide to the common ingredients in these products.

What's in over-the-counter cold/flu medicines?

The ingredients listed below are found in many cold/flu medicines. Read labels carefully.

If you have questions, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Analgesics relieve aches and pains and reduce fever. Examples: acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, ketoprofen, naproxen. Warning: Children and teenagers shouldn't be given aspirin.

Antitussives tell your brain to stop coughing. Don't take an antitussive if you're coughing up mucus. Example: dextromethorphan.

Expectorants help thin mucus so it can be coughed up more easily. Example: guaifenesin.

Oral decongestant shrinks the nasal passages and reduce congestion. Example: pseudoephedrine.

### **Prescription Anti-Flu Medications;**

There are several medications however that can help shorten the duration of the illness; Amantadine (Symmetrel) 100 mg twice daily (or once daily for the elderly). This treats Flu type A only.

Rimantadine (Flumadine) 100 mg twice daily for 3-5 days for Type A only. To prevent the Flu used as 100 mg twice daily or once daily for the elderly.

Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) oral tablets 75 mg twice daily to treat the flu for 5 days or 75 mg once daily for 7-10 days to help prevent the flu after you've been exposed to it. This drug is thought to provide more protection against the Avian (Bird) Flu as well. This treats flu Type A&B.

Zanamivir (Relenza Dischaler) 2 puffs twice daily for 5 days. For Flu Type A&B.

### **Prevention;**

Your best bet, though, is to prevent the flu with good hand-washing and by getting a flu shot.

What can I do to keep from catching colds and the flu?

The viruses that cause colds and the flu are spread by hand-to-hand contact and by droplets released in the air from sneezes and coughs. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, and avoid touching your eyes or nose.

### **Should I get a flu shot?**

It's a very good idea to get a flu shot every year if you fall into any of the groups listed in the box below. People in these groups are more likely to have serious problems from the flu, such as pneumonia. If you're interested in getting a flu shot, talk to your doctor.

October and November are the best months to get a flu shot.

People who are allergic to eggs shouldn't get flu shots.

People who should get a flu shot

People who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities

Adults and children with chronic heart or lung disease

Adults and children with diabetes, kidney disease, anemia or immune-system problems including AIDS

Pregnant women with high-risk conditions

Children on long-term aspirin therapy

People over age 50

Health care workers.

The New England Journal of Medicine recently published an article detailing how to give 1/10<sup>th</sup> dose of the vaccine into the skin where there are a lot of immune-system cells.

This dose seems to provide protection equal to the traditional shot of a larger dose into the arm muscles while lessening the risk of adverse reactions.

Flumist is a nasal vaccine that can be used in people younger than 50 years old. It may have better protection against the Avian Flu if that epidemic should develop this year as it has in the past in Asia.

### **What is "Bird Flu"?**

Avian Flu or "bird flu" is a virus that affects poultry. It occasionally crosses species to infect humans. These viruses are very small—to small to be seen with a microscope. They multiply very rapidly. With the immense numbers involved, mutations, or changes to the genetic code happen, usually by accident, but regardless of how the net result does one of two things: it either kills the virus or it gives it a new ability. One such new ability that we worry about is for the avian flu to be able to cross more easily into human hosts. This cross-over has happened but rarely does so. When it does it can be lethal and kill the person afflicted. The next steps to worry about would be for it to cross-infect to humans more easily, then a second mutation allowing it to be passed efficiently from human to human, which so far has not happened. Most scientists who study the flu think it's "only a matter of time" before this happens. During World War I there was the "Spanish Flu" that decimated large areas with death rates higher than 25-30% of those afflicted. We haven't had a flu that deadly since then, but the avian flu is a candidate, it just needs a couple of small mutations to give it that degree of deadliness.

### **When should I call my doctor?**

In most cases, you don't need to see your doctor when you have a cold or the flu.

However, if you have any of the symptoms in the box below, call your doctor.

A cold that lasts for more than 10 days  
Earache or drainage from your ear  
Severe pain in your face or forehead  
Temperature above 102°F  
Shortness of breath  
Hoarseness, sore throat or a cough that won't go away  
Wheezing

Flu season generally runs from January thru April, it's best to get the "flu shot" in the Fall to provide protective antibodies thru the winter season.

Wash your hands, take your vitamin C and stay healthy!