

It's Flu Season!

The flu, caused by the influenza virus, and the common cold, also caused by a virus, can present with similar symptoms. However, because they are both viruses, antibiotics are not indicated to treat either of these respiratory illnesses, unless a bacterial complication arises. Below are some of the distinguishing symptoms:

Cold	Flu	
Runny, stuffy nose	Fever	Headaches
Cough	Chills	Fatigue
Sore Throat	Muscle or Body Aches	Runny, stuffy nose, sore throat

The common cold is usually much milder than the flu. The flu can result in much more severe complications, like bacterial pneumonia and even death. Because they share common symptoms, special tests can be performed in the first few days to distinguish between the common cold and the flu.

How do we prevent the flu?

- #1 Recommendation: **Vaccination**: The CDC recommends **EVERYONE** 6 months of age and older receive the flu vaccine. The flu vaccine can help prevent flu illness and hospitalizations and may even make illness milder if the flu is contracted. The CDC estimated that 5.1 million influenza illnesses were prevented during the 2015-2016 season by influenza vaccination.

Practice good hygiene :	
Wash hands often with soap and water	Cover mouth/nose with tissue when sneezing or coughing, not your hands.
Close contact with sick people should be avoided.	If you are sick with the flu, the CDC recommends that you stay at home for 24 hours after your fever has disappeared to avoid spreading the illness to others.

What are the recommendations for the 2017-2018 Flu Season?

- The nasal spray is NOT recommended this season due to concerns regarding effectiveness. Only injectable flu vaccines will be offered this year.
- People who have egg allergies can still receive the flu vaccine. If they have had a severe reaction such as angioedema, it should be given under the supervision of a healthcare professional in a medical setting.
 - The CDC has removed the recommendation to observe for 30 minutes post-vaccination for signs/symptoms of an allergic reaction. They are recommending that providers instead consider observing all patients for 15 minutes after vaccination to decrease the risk of injury should they experience syncope

Antivirals can be used for treatment and prevention of the flu.	
Antivirals can help shorten the duration of the illness by 1-2 days and can also decrease the risk of serious flu complications. They work best if taken within the first 2 days of getting sick.	Antivirals are recommended to be used as soon as possible in any patient with confirmed or suspected flu that is at a higher risk of serious complications from the flu, including the elderly population.
Antivirals used in the elderly population: Tamiflu (oseltamivir) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your HealthDirect consultant pharmacist for assistance with Tamiflu dosing. • Treatment duration for Tamiflu is 5 days. 	Chemoprophylaxis in LTC setting: CDC recommends antiviral chemoprophylaxis for a minimum of 2 weeks, and continuing up to 1 week after the last known case was identified. Antiviral chemoprophylaxis is recommended for all residents, including those who have received influenza vaccination, and for unvaccinated institutional employees.

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>

Show What You Know

It's Flu Season!

1) TRUE OR FALSE

Flu vaccination does not help prevent the flu. In fact, the flu vaccine can cause the flu, therefore it's not necessary for everyone to receive it.

2) WHAT IS THE #1 RECOMMENDATION FOR PREVENTION OF THE FLU?

- a. Wash hands
- b. Antivirals (i.e. Tamiflu)
- c. Vaccination
- d. Probiotics

3) TRUE OR FALSE

The flu and common cold are viral illnesses that should be treated with antibiotics.

4) A NURSING HOME PATIENT TESTS POSITIVE FOR THE FLU VIRUS. WHO SHOULD BE GIVEN TAMIFLU ON THE UNIT THE PATIENT RESIDES?

- a. Only those patients who did not receive the flu vaccine.
- b. All residents on the unit should be given Tamiflu, including those that received the flu vaccine, for chemoprophylaxis.
- c. Only the patient that tested positive for the flu needs the Tamiflu, the rest of the patients do not need the antiviral.
- d. The CDC recommends against antiviral use in the nursing home population.

How did you do?

ANSWERS:

1. False

The flu vaccine can help prevent flu illness and hospitalizations and may even make illness milder if the flu is contracted. The CDC estimated that 5.1 million influenza illnesses were prevented during the 2015-2016 season by influenza vaccination.

2. C

The #1 recommendation to prevent the flu is vaccination. The CDC recommends EVERYONE 6 months of age and older receive the flu vaccine.

3. False

Antivirals can be used for treatment and prevention of the flu. Antivirals can help shorten the duration of the illness by 1-2 days and can also decrease the risk of serious flu complications. They work best if taken within the first 2 days of getting sick.

4. B

Antivirals are recommended to be used as soon as possible in any patient with confirmed or suspected flu that is at a higher risk of serious complications from the flu, including the elderly population. The CDC recommends treatment for all residents, including those who have received influenza vaccination.