

It looks like you have the "flu". UGH!! It can make you feel **really bad!** Here are some facts about the flu and answers to common questions. You can go to www.cdc.gov/flu for more facts about the flu.

The Flu

The flu is a specific viral illness. It is not related to colds, which, although symptoms are similar, are caused by totally different viruses. Antibiotic drugs do not help the flu since it is a virus.

Symptoms

Symptoms of the flu typically include cough, fever, aches, and a feeling weak ("hit by a Mack truck"). Those symptoms are different from just a cold, and it can come on quickly. A sore throat and runny nose are common in both illnesses.

Treatment

Treatment of the flu, much like treatment of a cold, is like a cold, usually the symptoms are treated. In other words, treating with things like acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), and naproxen (Aleve). If your kidneys don't work very well, be sure to ask if using these drugs are ok. Cough medicines, especially those containing dextromorphan (DM), can help. However, for flu, a prescription medicine, Tamiflu, can slightly reduce the severity of the illness and shorten the length of the infection by a day or two - but only if started within the first 48 hours of the illness.

Flu is very contagious through droplets spread by coughing. It is important to cover your cough (elbows are great!) and wash hands frequently. Close physical contact should be avoided (especially tough when families get together over the holidays!). The flu is contagious starting the day before symptoms develop (which is one of the reasons it spreads so quickly) to 5-7 days after symptoms develop.

Dangers

One of the big dangers of the flu is that it can lead to problems such as pneumonia and bronchitis. These problems can be treated with antibiotics. If your fever persists after the fourth day, if you start getting better, then suddenly feel worse, if you start becoming short of breath, or if you see no improvement in your symptoms after 7-8 days (although the cough of flu can last up to two weeks), please contact our office to be seen.