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## Taking Care of Yourself: what to do if you get the flu

Flu-like symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and possibly nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. If you have any of these symptoms, you may have the flu. If you live alone, ask a friend, family member or neighbour to check in on you, and follow these simple steps to help reduce your symptoms.

### What can I do to reduce flu-like symptoms?

Most healthy people recover from the flu without complications. If you get the flu:

- stay home
- increase the amount of **fluids** you drink (water, flat ginger ale, diluted apple juice, broth, sports drinks)
- get plenty of **rest** and avoid alcohol and tobacco
- when necessary, use over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever and aches - always follow manufacturers' instructions

**Never give aspirin/Acetylsalicylic Acid (ASA) to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms, particularly fever. This can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's Syndrome.**

### Who is most at risk of severe illness?

Some people are at higher risk for severe flu complications. Call your health care provider or TeleHealth Ontario if you (or someone you are caring for) have flu-like symptoms, and are in any of the following categories:

- pregnant
- elderly (over 65 years)
- young (under age 5)
- have a chronic medical condition such as diabetes, asthma, cancer, heart disease or HIV/AIDS

### When should I seek emergency medical care?

If you have flu-like symptoms, and are unable to get to your doctor, or see a health care provider, go to a hospital emergency room if you have any of the symptoms listed below.

Infants and Children	Adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• fever in infants less than 3 months</li><li>• fever with rash</li><li>• fast or troubled breathing</li><li>• purple or blue discoloration of the lips or skin</li><li>• drinking very little fluid and urinating less than usual</li><li>• difficulty waking up or confusion</li><li>• irritability - child does not want to be held</li><li>• seizures (convulsion/fit) or stiff neck</li><li>• flu-like symptoms improve then return with fever and/or worsening cough</li><li>• underlying health condition that worsens</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• difficulty breathing or shortness of breath</li><li>• chest pain</li><li>• severe or persistent vomiting</li><li>• fever that lasts for more than 2 days</li><li>• confusion or difficulty waking up</li><li>• sudden dizziness</li><li>• flu-like symptoms improve then return with fever and/or worsening cough</li><li>• underlying health condition that worsens</li></ul>

**This information must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care provider before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.**

Over

# Fact Sheet

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Key Symptoms	Recommended Self Care
Fever or chills <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>body temperature above 38°C or 100.4°F</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>dress in lightweight clothing</li><li>drink plenty of cool fluids (water, flat ginger ale, diluted apple juice, broth, sports drinks)</li><li>over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be used</li></ul>
Cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>over-the-counter medications such as cough syrups with dextromethorphan (DM) can be used, but should be avoided in children under age 6</li></ul>
Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>gargle with salt water</li><li>try throat lozenges but avoid giving to young children</li></ul>
Muscle aches, headaches, joint pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be used</li></ul>
Fatigue/weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>get plenty of rest and avoid tobacco and alcohol</li></ul>
Nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>increase the amount of fluids you drink; sip fluids slowly</li><li>eat small and more frequent meals</li><li>avoid: carbonated drinks, strong smells, spicy, fatty and salty foods, dairy products</li><li>avoid alcohol, tobacco and caffeine</li></ul>
Nasal congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>use a cool mist humidifier</li><li>over-the-counter normal saline sprays can be used to soften or thin nasal secretions</li><li>over-the-counter medications such as decongestants may help</li><li>avoid decongestants, if you have health problems, including high blood pressure, or take prescription medications</li></ul>

### General guidelines for over-the-counter medications

- Talk to your pharmacist or healthcare provider about what product is best for you, including dosage, possible side effects and health conditions or other medications that could interfere with safe use of the medication.
- Try 'regular strength' products before 'extra strength'.
- Always follow the manufacturer's directions.
- If taking more than one medication at a time, check the labels to avoid taking the same ingredient twice.
- Keep all medications out of reach of children.
- Do not give over-the-counter medications to children under 6 years old without first talking to your health care provider. The only exceptions are medications to treat fever (such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen).
- Never give aspirin/Acetylsalicylic Acid (ASA) to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms, particularly fever. This can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's Syndrome.

### Where can I get more information?

- Toronto Public Health [toronto.ca/health](https://toronto.ca/health) or 416-338-7600
- TeleHealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000
- Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care [health.gov.on.ca](https://health.gov.on.ca)
- Public Health Agency of Canada [phac-aspc.gc.ca](https://phac-aspc.gc.ca) or 1-800-454-8302
- Fight flu [fightflu.ca/](https://fightflu.ca/)