



## WHAT IS A COLD/FLU?

Colds and flu are the number 1 reason students visit the Office of Health Services. Flu is short for influenza, a virus that affects your nose, throat and lungs. Flu symptoms come on suddenly and affect the body all over. Cold symptoms mostly affect you above the neck. Colds occur throughout the year. Flu most commonly occurs in winter. Stomach flu is not influenza.

## CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS

### Common cold

The common cold is caused by any one of 200 viruses. The symptoms include a runny nose, red eyes, sneezing, sore throat, and dry cough. As the cold progresses nasal drainage may thicken. This is the stage before a cold dries up. A cold usually lasts about one or two weeks.

### Influenza

Influenza or “flu” is a viral illness that affects many people at once (epidemic). Influenza has symptoms similar to a cold, but they are usually more severe and come on quite suddenly. Symptoms include fever (101 – 104), chills, muscle aches, headache, fatigue, weakness, sneezing and runny nose. Symptoms may last five to seven days.

## RED FLAGS

If you experience any of the following symptoms you should seek immediate care:

- ◆ Stiff neck (can’t touch your chin to your chest).
- ◆ Severe, persistent headache.
- ◆ Red or purple rash
- ◆ Seizure
- ◆ Sudden repeated vomiting.
- ◆ Pain in the upper right area of the abdomen
- ◆ Rapid changes in your mental status.
- ◆ Increased pulse and breathing rate.
- ◆ Shortness of breath, loss of consciousness.
- ◆ Fever over 101 or 100 for more than 3 days.
- ◆ Nasal congestion with facial pain or pain in the upper teeth.
- ◆ Mucous coughed up from the lungs that is yellow, green, rust colored and other symptoms are worsening.
- ◆ A sore throat that is bright red or has white spots.
- ◆ An earache
- ◆ A cough with shortness of breath, chest tightness, chest pain or difficulty sleeping or lying down.
- ◆ A productive cough that lingers more than 7 to 10 days after other symptoms have cleared



## TREATMENT

### Cold

- ◆ Get extra rest.
- ◆ Drink plenty of liquids. Hot water, herbal tea, or chicken soup will help relieve congestion.
- ◆ Take ibuprofen or acetaminophen to relieve aches.
- ◆ Humidify your bedroom and take hot showers to relieve nasal stuffiness.
- ◆ Gargle with warm salt water or Listerine.
- ◆ If your nose is red and raw put a bit of Vaseline on the sore area.
- ◆ Avoid cold remedies that combine drugs such as decongestants, antihistamines, and pain relievers. Treat each symptom separately.
- ◆ Use nasal decongestant sprays for only three days or less. Continued use may lead to a “rebound effect when the mucous membranes swell up more than before using the spray.

### Influenza (Flu)

- ◆ Get plenty of rest.
- ◆ Drink extra fluids, at least one glass of water or juice every waking hour.
- ◆ Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve fever, headache, and muscle aches.

## PREVENTION

- ◆ Wash your hands often. Use an instant hand sanitizer when you can't wash your hands.
- ◆ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- ◆ Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- ◆ Don't smoke
- ◆ Keep up your resistance to infection with a good diet, plenty of rest, and regular exercise.
- ◆ Try not to touch people or their things when they have a cold or the flu.
- ◆ Get a flu shot each fall if your health care provider advises.

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### Hours of Operation

Monday--Friday 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. If you have any questions about the disease described above or think that you may have an infection, consult MyHealth@School.*

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# COLDS AND FLU