

## Flu Season

It's flu season again! The flu has been in the news a lot lately and more people than ever before have been vaccinated against the flu this season. An early flu season coupled with a virulent strain of the illness has brought it to our nation's attention.

But still, questions persist. What is the difference between a cold and the flu? What should I do if I get the flu? If I had a flu shot, can I still get sick?

The flu is a virus, similar to the cold virus, only stronger. Indeed, they share a lot of the same symptoms. Children are usually the first people to get the flu every year and it spreads to older people as the season progresses. Here are some ways to tell if you have a bad cold or the flu.

SYMPTOM	COLD	FLU
Fever	Rare	Yes/usually greater than 101° for 3 to 4 days
Chest Discomfort	Mild to moderate	Common
Body Aches	Slight	Usual and often severe
Headache	Rare	Prominent
Tiredness	Very Mild	May last 2 to 3 weeks
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Cough	Hacking	Non-productive and sometimes severe

The best thing to do is to be vaccinated against the flu so you do not get it, but remember, many viral illnesses have similar symptoms and you may still get sick from one of those. What should you do if you do get the flu? Get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids, and take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to help control the fever and body aches. If you see your doctor soon enough, within 48 hours of getting sick, he may be able to prescribe medicine that will help shorten the course of the illness.

Knowing what the flu is, what to do, and when to see your doctor is the key to battling the flu. There! Now don't you feel better already?