

What To Do If You Get the Flu

I'm guessing that the flu isn't on your top-10 wish list, right? But just in case you get sick this flu season, here's a list of 10 things you can do to help ease your symptoms—and to stop the flu in its tracks and protect others.

1. Stock up. A few supplies may make it a bit easier to manage the flu. It's best to have these on hand *before* you get sick. Otherwise, send a healthy member of your family out on an errand, if you can.

- Acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen for reducing fevers and easing achiness
- A thermometer
- Cough syrup or cough drops
- Saline nose drops or sprays
- Drinks such as fruit juices or tea (avoid caffeine)
- Easy-to-eat foods such as clear soups, crackers, or applesauce^{1,2}

2. Stay home! The first day you have symptoms, you may be tempted to venture out to work or school. Please don't! Not only do you need the rest, but this is also when you're most contagious.¹ Try to nap—and read or binge-watch your favorite television episodes.

3. Prevent the spread. In addition to staying home, wash your hands often and cover your cough and sneeze into your sleeve.²

4. Drink fluids, breathe steam. This is a great way to thin your mucus, making it easier to cough up. This may help prevent a lung infection. Using a humidifier (a cool mist) or breathing in steam from a hot shower may also help ease congestion.¹

5. Calm your cough. It can be exhausting, I know. Try over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicines—an expectorant helps thin mucus. Do not give a child under age 4 any type of cough medicine. Sucking on lozenges may also help your cough or scratchy throat.¹

6. Ease nose woes. You—or your kids—can try saline nose drops or sprays to ease nasal congestion. First, put a few drops into one nostril. Then gently blow the mucus and saline out. Repeat on the other side.¹

7. Treat other symptoms. Sure, a fever—along with chills and achiness—is a sign your body is fighting off the virus. But that doesn't mean you need to suffer in silence. Ask me if you have any questions about which fever reducer to take. But don't forget: Never give aspirin to someone younger than 19—it can lead to a serious illness.¹

8. Ask about antivirals. Your health care provider may advise you to take one. If you do this within 48 hours of when symptoms begin, you have a fighting chance of reducing their impact.^{1,2}

9. Know when to seek medical help. If you or a loved one has any of these symptoms, call the doctor:

- Dark urine
- Dizziness
- Fever of 100 degrees F for 3 or more days
- Returning fever or sore throat after feeling better

More serious symptoms require *immediate* medical care:

- Wheezing or shortness of breath
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain or pressure
- Balance problems or confusion²

10. Talk to me! And of course it goes without saying: If you need guidance about any products—or any questions whatsoever—let me know, and I'll try to steer you in the right direction.

Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

Sources

1. WebMD: "10 Tips to Ease Flu Symptoms." Available at: <http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/flu-guide/coping-with-flu#1> Accessed 8-31-17.
2. Public Health: "Treatment of Flu." Available at: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/treatment/> Accessed 8-31-17.