



**University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center**

INFLUENZA (FLU)

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed influenza (flu). Flu is an infection caused by a virus. Flu is spread person-to-person by the respiratory route (coughing, sneezing), or direct contact (shaking hands with an infected person just after he/she coughs onto his/her hand).

Symptoms of flu include fever, headache, body aches, fatigue (tired feeling), and loss of appetite; nausea, chills, eye irritation, and cough can also occur.

Fortunately, influenza is generally less serious than bacterial infections and some viral infections. Unfortunately, influenza can make you feel miserable. Anti-viral medicines can help, but they are not typically as effective as antibiotics (which work against bacterial infections). The infection must ultimately be overcome by your own body's defense mechanisms.

The *symptoms* of influenza can be treated.

Influenza is seasonal. Most cases occur in outbreaks from November through April. Peak months are January and February.

Keep in mind that differentiation between influenza and bacterial infections is not 100%. Also, influenza can become serious. At present, you appear to have a non-serious influenza infection. **Remember, though, if your symptoms change or worsen, you should be examined again promptly.**

A yearly vaccine is available to prevent flu. The vaccine is not effective if a person already has the flu: Several weeks pass after injection before the vaccine is protective.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT INFLUENZA:

1. Rest at home.
2. Drink plenty of liquids. Do not force solid food, especially if you are nauseated.
3. Over-the-counter medicines can help treat specific symptoms. Acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen are effective for headache, body aches and fever. Cough medicine containing dextromethorphan (DM) is helpful for cough.
4. If an anti-viral medicine is prescribed, take the medicine as directed.
5. To help prevent flu, wash your hands frequently. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Stay at home, away from others, if you are running fever or feeling sick.
6. If your symptoms or overall condition worsen, seek medical care promptly. Return to the Student Health Center (SHC), see another medical provider, or go to the nearest emergency department without delay. Specifically, seek immediate care if you experience a high fever (>102.5) with severe headache or a stiff, painful neck (can't put your chin down to your chest due to pain in the back of the neck), or if you are consistently coughing up foul/bloody sputum, or experiencing cough associated with shortness of breath or chest pain.
7. If you have concerns about ongoing mild symptoms, return to the SHC or see your personal/referral provider.
8. In the future, get an annual flu shot.