



Saint Alphonsus Medical Group

Is it the Flu? Or is it a Cold? Call 367-DOCS if you need a physician or to find the closest location.

It's a common question this time of year -- is that a cold going around or is it "the flu" or influenza? Often times it is difficult to answer because they have similar symptoms and both are respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold and many of the symptoms are more common and intense. Colds are usually milder than the flu and are more likely to result in people having a runny or stuffy nose. In order to clinically distinguish the difference between the cold and the flu, a special test can be done within the first two days of the illness, and if the flu is identified early enough special medications (antivirals) may be prescribed for patients.

The differences between the flu and cold are highlighted below:

Cold vs. Flu		
Symptom	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Common
Aches	Light aches	Severe aches and pains
Chills	Uncommon	Common
Tiredness	Mild	Moderate to severe
Sudden Symptoms	Slow onset	Rapid (usually 3-6 hours)
Coughing	Common and productive	Dry cough very common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort	Mild	Common
Headache	Rare	Prominent

What YOU CAN DO to Stay Healthy!

- Influenza is thought to **spread mainly from person-to-person** when an infected person coughs or sneezes, sending flu germs into the air and onto surfaces.
- **Take everyday actions to stay healthy.**
 - When you cough or sneeze, **cover your nose and mouth with a tissue**, throwing the tissue away after use. If a tissue is not available, **cough or sneeze into the elbow or upper sleeve.**
 - **Wash your hands with soap and water often**, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
 - **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth** to limit the spread of germs.
 - If you have a fever (100.0° F or 37.8° C orally), **stay home until 24 hours after the fever is gone.** CDC recommends staying home from work or school and limiting contact with others to keep from exposing others.
- **Follow public health advice** regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- **Practice good health habits** – getting enough sleep, nutritious foods and fluids; being physically active and managing stress and anxiety.
- **Stay informed.** For more information on influenza go to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>