Do I have the flu? What care should I get?

A self-assessment flowchart

This self-assessment flowchart gives influenza (flu) symptoms. It may help you decide to stay home if you have some of these symptoms. It also lists when to get care right away and when to call your health care provider. Your local health department may have additional advice on what to do if you have flu symptoms. This chart is not a substitute for medical care.

Q. Do you have a cough or sore throat?
   Yes
   No

Q. Do you now or in past few days:
   _ feel like you have a fever?
   _ have shaking or chills?
   _ feel sweaty?
   Yes to one or more
   No

You may have the flu. (Other flu symptoms can be aches, a stuffy or runny nose, fatigue, diarrhea, or nausea.)

Q. Do you have any of these?
   _ Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
   _ New pain or pressure in the chest
   _ Confusion
   _ Vomiting
   _ Dizziness
   _ Less urine (pee) produced
   _ Seizures
   _ A fever or cough/sore throat that went away and came back
   Yes
   No

You probably do not have the flu. Be sure to stay healthy, wash your hands, cover your coughs, and stay away from people who are ill if you are able. If you begin to worry about your health, call the nurse advice line or health care provider.

Q. Are you pregnant?
   Yes
   No

Q. Do you have any of these?
   _ Age 18 and under on chronic aspirin treatment
   _ Age 65 and older
   _ Lung disease (like asthma)
   _ Heart disease
   _ Diabetes
   _ Severe obesity
   _ A transplanted organ
   _ HIV/AIDS
   _ Kidney failure (dialysis)
   _ Liver disease
   _ Sickle cell disease
   _ Brain illness (such as traumatic brain injury or TBI)
   _ Spinal cord injury
   _ Nerve and muscle disease (such as multiple sclerosis)
   _ Treatment with 20 mg or more prednisone per day
   Yes to any of these
   No

Get care right away

Call your health care provider or, if it seems like an emergency, call 911 or go to an emergency room.

Call your health care provider

He or she may help you get care at home, prescribe medications, or assess whether you should come in for a medical visit or hospital stay.

Stay home

- Rest
- Drink fluids
- Take fever-reducing drugs, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin)
- Take other medicines as prescribed by your health care provider

NOTE: Stay home for several days until you feel better and have been without a fever for at least 24 hours without taking fever-reducing drugs. (Brand names included in this information are provided as examples only.)

Q. Is there someone at home to take care of you?
   Yes
   No

For information on flu, including home care, visit www.publichealth.va.gov and www.flu.gov.