

# Understanding Influenza

	Seasonal Flu	Common Cold
<b>What is it?</b>	Influenza, or the flu, is a common and highly contagious, infectious respiratory disease that affects the nose, throat and lungs. Influenza viruses can change rapidly. That's why there is a new flu shot made every year to protect against the circulating virus strains.	A cold is a mild infection of the nose and throat caused by a variety of viruses. Although a cold might linger, the symptoms remain mild.
<b>Symptoms</b>	<p><b>Almost always</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sudden onset of cough and fever</li> </ul> <p><b>Common</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fatigue</li> <li>Muscle aches</li> <li>Sore throat</li> <li>Headache</li> <li>Decreased appetite</li> <li>Runny nose</li> </ul> <p><b>Sometimes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nausea</li> <li>Vomiting</li> <li>Diarrhea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Runny nose</li> <li>Sneezing</li> <li>Cough</li> <li>Sore throat</li> </ul>

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## Severity Indicators

If you develop the following symptoms, you need to see a health care provider right away:

- Shortness of breath, rapid or difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Bluish or grey skin color
- Bloody or coloured mucus/spit
- Sudden dizziness or confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- High fever lasting more than three days
- Low blood pressure

**Additional symptoms to watch for in children:**

- Not drinking enough fluids or eating
- Not waking up or interacting
- Irritability; not wanting to play or be held

## People at Risk of Complications

The following groups are not more likely to get the flu. However, they are more at risk of developing complications if they do get sick:

- Children under five years of age (especially those less than two years old)
- Women who are pregnant
- People with chronic conditions such as:
  - Heart disease
  - Liver disease
  - Kidney disease
  - Blood disorders
  - Diabetes
  - Severe obesity
  - Asthma and chronic lung disease
  - Immunosuppressed (people taking cancer drugs or people with HIV/AIDS)
  - Neurological disorders
- Aboriginal people

**IMPORTANT** If you have flu symptoms and you have one of these risk factors, contact a health care provider as soon as possible — antiviral medications may be needed.

To find out more, visit [www.fightflu.ca](http://www.fightflu.ca) or call 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232) (TTY 1-800-926-9105)



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