YOUR ULTIMATE FLU SURVIVAL GUIDE

CHICKEN SOUP, HERBAL REMEDIES, ANTIVIRAL DRUGS, OH MY! HERE'S EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW.
IS IT THE FLU OR JUST A REALLY BAD COLD?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that affects between 5 and 20 percent of Americans every year. It can sometimes be confused with the common cold since both share similar symptoms. But if you have a high fever, runny nose, and nagging cough — and find yourself buried beneath a pile of blankets but still feel chilled to the bone — you'll know. Chances are you've got the flu.
SO, WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU?

Unlike cold symptoms, which develop gradually, flu symptoms usually come on suddenly and tend to be more severe. You also have a greater risk of developing complications, such as pneumonia. Flu symptoms typically include:

- High fever — 102 degrees F or greater (but not everyone develops a fever)
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Body aches
- Headache, especially around and behind the eyes
- Loss of smell, may last a few days or weeks
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (more common in children)

Cold symptoms tend to be milder and improve within a week to 10 days. Flu symptoms, on the other hand, are more severe, and people may take up to two weeks to recover.
HOW DO I KNOW FOR SURE I’VE GOT THE FLU?

If you suspect you’ve got the flu, visit your doctor. He or she may take a swab of mucus from your nose or throat to test for influenza virus infection (also called the rapid influenza test). Just keep in mind that the results aren’t always reliable. Also, if your doctor suspects you have pneumonia, a common and serious flu complication, you may also get a chest X-ray.

UGH, I’VE GOT THE FLU. WHAT CAN I DO?

Besides getting lots of rest and drinking plenty of fluids, try these tips to relieve some of your flu symptoms:

- Drink hot green, black, or herbal tea, flavored with lemon or honey.
- Eat hot chicken soup.
- Use a humidifier to moisten dry air.
- Take a hot shower or simply sit in the bathroom with the shower running to create steam.
- Bring a large pan of water to a boil, take it off the heat, then inhale the steam by leaning over the water with or without a towel draped over your head to create a “steam tent.”
- Gargle with hot salt water to ease a sore throat.
- Use a neti pot or similar device to rinse the nasal passages with saline.
- Place a hot compress on your forehead or nose to help with headache or sinus pain.
In that case, antiviral drugs may be what your soul needs right now. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends four FDA-approved antiviral drugs to treat flu:

• **Xofluza** (baloxavir marboxil) is a fast-acting, single-dose pill that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved in October 2018.

• **Tamiflu** (oseltamivir) is available as a liquid or a capsule and can be used to treat flu in infants as young as two weeks.

• **Relenza** (zanamivir) is available as a powder that is inhaled, and has been approved for treatment of the flu in people ages 7 and older.

• **Rapivab** (peramivir) is given intravenously, and is approved for flu treatment in people ages 2 and older.

Keep in mind that while these medicines may shorten the duration of your symptoms, you’ll need to start them in the first two days of illness for them to be effective.
WHAT ABOUT HERBS AND SUPPLEMENTS? CAN THEY HELP?

Can’t say for sure. The jury’s still out about the effectiveness of herbal remedies, but many people believe herbs can help prevent or treat flu symptoms. Some popular herbal remedies include:

- Echinacea, to reduce the duration of a cold or the flu
- Elderberry extract, to reduce congestion and increase perspiration
- Eucalyptus, to relieve congestion, loosen phlegm, and soothe a sore throat
- Licorice, to treat a sore throat
- Peppermint (menthol), to thin mucus, relieve congestion, and loosen phlegm
- Slippery elm, to soothe a sore throat

Because herbs can have side effects and can interact with medication or dietary supplements you’re taking, make sure to check with your doctor before using them first. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not use herbal remedies.
Flu season typically occurs between October and May, although flu viruses are around all year.

Antibiotics are not an effective treatment option since the flu is caused by a virus, not by bacteria.

There are four types of influenza viruses: A and B, most commonly associated with seasonal flu and epidemics; C, a relatively rare type that causes mild respiratory illness; and D, which primarily affects cattle.

Complications of flu can include pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus or ear infections.

The flu shot reduces the risk of illness by between 40 and 60 percent during seasons when the vaccines are well-matched to the viruses going around.

To learn more, visit our Cold and Flu Guide at www.everydayhealth.com/flu/guide.