

Flu



Children's
of Alabama®

Sometimes mistaken for the common cold, the flu (influenza) causes more intense symptoms and typically lasts longer than a cold and sometimes can cause serious illness. Fortunately, most kids who get the flu can get over the infection without any problems. The flu occurs most often in the winter months.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Sore throat
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dizziness
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Diarrhea
- Tiredness

What to Do:

- Call the child's doctor
- Encourage rest
- Keep the child hydrated with plenty of fluids – breast milk or formula for babies; water, juice, ice pops, and cool drinks for older kids (but no caffeinated drinks).
- Relieve symptoms with:
 - A warm bath
 - A cool-mist humidifier
 - Saline (or saltwater) nose drops
 - Acetaminophen or ibuprofen (check package for correct dosage)

Never give aspirin to a child with the flu. Do not give cough or cold medicine to children under 6 years old (call the doctor first for older kids).

Seek medical care if the child has:

- Symptoms that get worse
- Trouble breathing
- A stiff neck
- Vomiting and unable to keep fluids down
- A severe cough
- A fever and is 3 months or younger
- A headache that doesn't go away after taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen

Seek Emergency Medical Care if the child:

- is working to breathe ("using chest muscles to get air in and out")
- is lethargic (hard to wake up your child)
- child is confused and unsteady
- provider recommends coming to the ED
- dehydration- not drinking well/not keeping fluids down/no urine out in 8 hours

Think Prevention!

- Get the flu vaccine each year
- Try to avoid large crowds during flu season
- Wash hands well and often

Flu Testing and Treatment



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Testing for the Flu

- Getting a flu shot each year is the best way to protect your child from the flu.
- Most of the time doctors will use the symptoms your child has to diagnose your child with flu.
- Occasionally, a rapid flu test is used to see if your child has the flu. But many children with the flu have a negative test and children without the flu will sometimes have a positive test so your medical provider will decide whether or not a flu test is needed.
- If a flu test is done, a nasal swab is needed for the test and it will take about an hour to get results.

Treatment for the Flu

- The best treatment of the flu involves rest and lots of fluids.
- Give Tylenol® (acetaminophen) or Motrin® (ibuprofen) for fever. NEVER give aspirin to a child with the flu.
- The flu is a virus and cannot be treated with antibiotics.
- There are prescription medications that may be prescribed for children who have a higher risk of severe complications, including children who have underlying medical problems. Talk to your child's doctor about these medications.
- If your child has the flu but is not given one of these prescribed medications, the best treatment is still to get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, and take Tylenol® (acetaminophen) or Motrin® (ibuprofen) as needed for fever or pain.

When should I call the doctor?

- Symptoms that get worse
 - Trouble breathing
 - Stiff neck
 - Vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
 - Severe cough
 - Fever in a child that is 3 months or younger
 - Headache that doesn't go away after acetaminophen or ibuprofen
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