

The Haven Practice

INFLUENZA OR FLU

Flu is a viral illness that usually occurs between December and March. The virus is usually spread by coughing and sneezing or touching infected surfaces such as door handles or light switches.

You are usually infectious from a couple of days before you get symptoms for up to 2 weeks.

The majority of people will recover from flu within a week, as your body develops immunity to the virus. However, young children, the elderly, pregnant women and those with long term health problems are more likely to develop serious complications.

Symptoms:

- Temperature over 38C
- Blocked or runny nose
- Sneeze
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Shivers or chills
- Aching muscles
- Fatigued

Treatment:

Self Help:

- Rest To allow you body to concentrate on fighting infection
- Drink plenty of fluids To prevent dehydration
- Steam inhalation To help blocked nose
- Warm damp air To help tickly cough
(Turn down heating or hang damp towels on radiator)
- Tissues with menthol
- Moisturisers To help sore/blocked nose
- Gargle salt water To ease sore throat
- Sucking sweets/ice lolly To ease sore throat/blocked sinuses
- Don't smoke yourself or To stop aggravating symptoms
secondhand

Medicines:

Remember the Pharmacist can always advise you.

Paracetamol and Ibuprofen may be helpful for pain and fever. Remember there may be Paracetamol in any cold remedy drinks Lemsip. DO NOT double up on medication

Decongestants come in tablet form and may help to unblock your nose. They also come in nasal sprays or drops. Decongestants are not recommended for children.

Saline drops may help to unblock noses. These can be very useful for babies before a feed.

Antihistamines may reduce runny nose and sneezing

Local anaesthetic sprays or lozenges can help to ease a sore throat. Not recommended for young children.

Complementary medicine:

There is limited evidence that taking Vitamin C supplement may reduce the length of a cold. Stick to the recommended dose as too much can give you diarrhoea.

Also there is limited evidence that Echinacea may reduce your symptoms.

Prevention:

Consider the annual Flu vaccination if you are in a high risk group.

Complications:

Contact the Doctor if you develop:

- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Difficulty breathing/breathlessness
- Skin rash
- Uncontrollable cough
- Phlegm that is green, bloody or frothy
- Extreme lethargy, difficulty staying awake