The **difference** between influenza and a cold

Influenza – sudden onset

Moderate to severe illness lasting 7–10 days
Fever (usually high)
Shivering
Muscle aches
Headache (may be severe)
Dry cough may become moist
Can suffer severe complications (pneumonia)
Bed rest necessary

Vaccine available

A Cold

Mild illness
Mild fever
A runny nose
Muscle pain uncommon
Mild headache (congested sinuses)
Sometimes a cough

No vaccine available

Influenza, commonly called "the flu", is a severe and sometimes life-threatening infection. Influenza may cause hospitalisation and prolonged illness, particularly in the elderly and those with a chronic condition.

Treating your influenza symptoms

In an uncomplicated attack of influenza, you can take the following steps to help you recover:

- Stay at home to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Rest to let the body fight the virus, until your temperature is normal and you are feeling well.
- Drink plenty of extra fluids.
- Control fever, aches and pains with aspirin or paracetamol for adults, and paracetamol only for children under the age of 18 years (aspirin should be avoided in children under 18 years).
- If you see your doctor or pharmacist within 48 hours of onset of symptoms, they can discuss antiviral medications which can shorten your illness.
- See your doctor if your symptoms get worse. These include: increasing breathing problems, coughing up yellow or green coloured phlegm, severe headaches or dehydration.
- Always ring your doctor or practice nurse if you are worried (or phone Healthline on 0800 611 116).

If you are 65 years and over OR if you have an ongoing medical condition, the complications from influenza can be much more severe. See your doctor.

Immunisation IS your best protection against influenza.

Influenza key messages

Influenza is a serious illness that can affect anyone.

Influenza can be life threatening and is easily spread from person to person.

Even when you are fit and active, immunisation is still the best protection against influenza.

Vaccinate as soon as the vaccine is available because it takes up to two weeks to protect you.

You need an influenza vaccination each year.

Influenza vaccine cannot cause influenza, as it does not contain any live viruses.

Influenza vaccination is offered FREE until the end of June to those at greatest risk - if you are 65 years and over OR if you have an ongoing medical condition.

For further information speak to your doctor or practice nurse

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
MANATŪ HAUORA

Revised May 2007. Reprinted June 2007. Code 1418

NISG
National Influenza Strategy Group