



safety focus

Colds, Flu, and Flu Vaccine

This Safety Focus informs employees about staying healthy during the winter months.

Cold vs. Flu - Influenza (the flu) and colds are respiratory (breathing) system infections caused by viruses. Initial symptoms of flu and colds are similar, and it is sometimes hard to tell if you have the flu or just a very bad cold. The flu can cause more serious illness than a cold.

Avoiding Flu and Colds - Your best protection against the flu is an annual flu shot. You can decrease your chances of getting a cold by frequently washing your hands and avoiding touching your nose, eyes, and mouth.

What a Cold Feels Like - Colds usually begin slowly, two to three days after infection, and normally last only 2 to 7 days. An unusually bad cold can last up to two weeks. You will first notice a scratchy, sore throat, followed by sneezing and a runny nose. You may get a mild cough several days later. Adults and older children usually don't have a fever.

What the Flu Feels Like - You will have a sudden headache and dry cough, and maybe a runny nose and sore throat. Your muscles will ache, you will be extremely tired, and you can have a fever up to 104°F (40°C). Most people feel better in a couple of days, but the tiredness and cough can last for two weeks or longer. Symptoms such as nausea, diarrhea, and vomiting are uncommon with the flu, except in very young children. Check with your healthcare professional if you have questions about the diagnosis and treatment of these illnesses.

Flu Vaccine - This is the best prevention against flu and its severe complications, including pneumonia, hospitalization, and death. Complications most often occur among those 65+ years of age, those with specific medical problems, and children younger than 2 years of age.

Vaccination is recommended for these groups and their close contacts:

- Health care providers.
- People with chronic illness or a suppressed immune system
- Healthy people over 50 years of age.
- Pregnant women in the second or third trimester.

The vaccine is not a live virus and **cannot give you the flu**. It is possible to have a bit of soreness at the injection site, typically in the arm, and occasionally fever and muscle aches for a couple of days.

The flu vaccine is free to all OHSU employees! Think of getting the vaccine yourself, and also promote the vaccine to patients and family members. They can be referred to their own physician or any local organization that is offering the influenza vaccine.

Coming in OCTOBER... Employee Health (503 494-5271) will be offering flu vaccine to all employees at both Marquam Hill and West Campus sites! They will send out an email very soon to all employees with the details.

This information is a service of the OHSU Safety Committee (503 494-7795).
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