

Battling Flu Season

This year is already a bad year for flu with a dramatic increase in cases reported. How can we avoid catching it and what should we do if we do get it?

What are the Symptoms of the Current flu?

- For the first few days, the flu feels like a cold: dry cough, aches and pain, nasal congestion, sore throat. Within a few days you will develop a high fever, become very tired and weak and the aches and pains will get much worse. In short, they won't want to get out of bed.
- Some people will also get gastro symptoms such as diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and stomach cramps.

How long will it last?

- The worst of the symptoms should start to pass after about a week but you may feel tired – exhausted even – and have a cough for up to a fortnight afterwards.

How is it Spread?

- The current flu is spread through droplets such as when a person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can travel up to a meter.
- It can also be spread by touching surfaces contaminated by these droplets – such as benchtops – and then touching your mouth.
- People can have the flu and be contagious for up to 5 days before symptoms appear.

How Do You Avoid Catching Flu?

- Wash your hands – especially before eating and drinking. If you don't have ready access to soap and water, use an alcohol antibacterial hand wash.
- Don't share items that touch the nose or mouth such as cutlery, cups, lipstick or cigarettes.
- Stay about one meter away from people who have flu like symptoms -if someone in a lift is coughing or sneezing, don't get in!
- Regularly clean surfaces which are commonly touched by people such as door handles, taps, fridge door and benches.
- If you have to clean up after somebody who vomited or has diarrhoea wear gloves and even a facemask and use bleach – normal bacterial wipes won't do the job – and paper towels which are then thrown away.
- If you are going on a plane or ship, take antibacterial hand wash and wipes to clean tables.

What Do You Do if You Catch Flu?

- Rest and stay warm – do not go to work, school or public places until at least 24 hours after the worst of the symptoms are totally gone (i.e. about a week after the onset of symptoms).
- Drink plenty of fluids – lots of water and if vomiting a lot, rehydration gel or powder. A little ginger in warm water may ease nausea and mint tea may refresh your mouth.
- Eat bland, easy to digest food: crackers, toast, banana, rice. Chicken soup has scientifically been proven to help reduce flu symptoms! Avoid caffeine, alcohol, dairy and fatty or spicy food.
- Do not prepare food for other people as you may infect them too.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and put used tissues straight in the bin.

When to See a Doctor

- If start to experience dizziness, high fevers, difficulty breathing, change in heart beat or any kind of rash, ring for an ambulance immediately.