

Influenza vs the Cold Virus: from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services
(updated by Terry Haag, School Nurse)

It is that time of year when the influenza as well as cold viruses are prevalent. How can you tell them apart and what to do:

Stomach flu/Gastroenteritis: Can be caused by viruses, bacteria etc. Vomiting and diarrhea, as well as nausea, are symptoms. Drink clear fluids and rest for 24-48 hours until the symptoms have subsided. Keep hydrated and avoid dairy until symptoms are no longer present. This is not prevented by having a flu shot; these are different bugs.

Common cold virus: Fever and headache are uncommon; sore throat, runny nose and productive hacking cough are common; fatigue and weakness usually mild. Duration is around 3-14 days.

Influenza: Usually accompanied by a fever of 100-104 degrees, which last 3-4 days. Headache, body aches, fatigue and weakness are common, and can last 14-21 days. Runny nose, sore throat, sneezing can occur. Nonproductive cough can last 3-14 days. Infectious period is 1-2 days before onset of symptoms and 5-10 days after symptoms. Infected individuals should stay home for at least 24 hours after fever is no longer present (without fever reducing medication).

If there are immune suppressed individuals, elderly or infants in your house, contact your medical provider for directives for those individuals. Often if an individual is diagnosed with Influenza, an anti-viral may be prescribed for family members if caught early enough. Even if an individual has received the influenza vaccine, they can still catch a milder case or a virus that wasn't covered in the vaccine.

To confirm an influenza case, a doctor will take a history of symptoms and test for the germ. Check with your medical provider if you or your student is exhibiting the above listed Influenza symptoms, or if you are concerned.

Prevention beyond the Influenza vaccine, for all viruses

- Cover sneezes and coughs
- Wash hands 20-30 seconds (or bacterial hand lotions next best) and wash household and school surfaces with soap and water frequently (door knobs too). Computer key boards, and phones are also germ havens.
- Use hot water for laundering towels
- Avoid sharing water bottles or drinks
- Drink lots of water, hot teas, soups, good fruit and vegetable juices. Avoid sweets and carbonated beverages and go for the healthy. Get lots of sleep and good rest.
- If you or your child has a fever, have them stay home and get well
- Check with your health provider on further suggestions

For more information visit

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/influenza/ColdFluPerussis.htm>