Flu Self-Care

What is the flu?
The flu is a viral infection of the respiratory tract, which includes the throat, nose, airways and lungs.

How is the flu prevented?
- An annual flu shot is the best form of prevention
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands with soap and water often and use hand sanitizers
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu

How do I know I have the flu?
Although the common cold and the flu share many similar symptoms, they are 2 different conditions. Flu symptoms usually appear suddenly and can include:
- Fever over 100°F, Chills, Sweats
- Cough, Stuffy or runny nose
- Nausea, Fatigue, Headache
- Muscle aches, especially in your back, arms and legs

Avoid contact with others
If you are sick, you may be ill for a week or longer. You should stay home or in your room if you have a temperature greater than 100 degrees and minimize contact with other persons. If you are coughing and leave your house or room to seek medical care, wear a mask or cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper arm. In general, you should avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness. Do not return to class until your temperature is below 100°F for 24 hours.

What can I do to feel better?
There is no cure for the flu, and antibiotics do not work against the viruses that cause the flu. Antiviral drugs are generally not recommended for healthy people who get the flu. Your health care provider may prescribe it for you if you have severe respiratory symptoms or underlying chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes, renal failure or are on certain immunosuppressive drugs.

Ways to treat flu symptoms
- Get plenty of rest, especially while you have a fever. Rest helps your body fight infection
- Drink plenty of fluids such as water, juice, tea, and clear soups. Fluids help loosen mucus. Fluids are also important because they help prevent dehydration
- Mucinex 1200 mg or Mucinex D 120/1200 mg twice a day can break up any chest or head congestion
- Gargle with warm salt water a few times a day to relieve a sore throat. Throat sprays or lozenges may also help relieve the pain. Tea with honey helps with throat pain
- Use saline (salt water) nose drops to help loosen mucus and moisten the tender skin in your nose
- Ibuprofen 600mg every 6 hours or Aleve 2 tablets twice a day or Tylenol 1000mg 4 times a day for fever and aches
- Stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke, which can make cold symptoms worse
- Avoid alcohol

When should I be seen at the Health Center?
- A fever above 100°F lasting more than 2 days and associated with fatigue and body aches
- Symptoms that last for more than 7 days or are getting worse instead of better
- Trouble breathing, wheezing, or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Fainting or feeling like you are about to faint
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Severe sinus pain in your face or forehead lasting more than 5 days
- Very swollen glands in the neck or jaw
- If you have other chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes, renal failure or are immunocompromised