

## When to Call the Doctor About Flu

If you just came down with miserable flu symptoms, you may wonder when to call the doctor. Sooner is better than later in case your doctor thinks you would benefit from flu medications that can help shorten the duration of the flu.

### What Are Common Flu Symptoms?

The first challenge is determining if you have flu symptoms. If you have these symptoms, give your doctor a call. Common symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever (usually over 102 degrees)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (much more common among children than adults)

If you have a chronic medical condition such as heart disease, asthma, COPD, diabetes, or HIV/AIDS, it's important to call your doctor when the first flu symptoms appear as flu might increase the risk of serious problems associated with your chronic condition.

Also, seek emergency medical help if you or a loved one is extremely short of breath or has a severe headache or stiff neck.

### What Flu Tests Will My Doctor Use?

Most of the time, a flu diagnosis is made by the person's symptoms. In some cases, your doctor may also run flu tests to make an accurate flu diagnosis. These tests usually involve taking a swab from your mouth and culturing this to identify the flu virus. Rapid flu tests may give your doctor results in about five to 30 minutes. Your doctor may prefer to use a rapid flu test before prescribing flu drugs, which must be taken within 48 hours of the first flu symptoms.

### What Antiviral Drugs Will My Doctor Prescribe for the Flu?

According to the CDC, two flu antiviral drugs are recommended for use in the United States. These antiviral drugs are Tamiflu and Relenza.

- Tamiflu is approved for prevention and treatment of flu in people 1 year old and older.
- Relenza is approved to treat flu in people 7 years old and older and to prevent flu in people 5 years old and older.

Tamiflu and Relenza must be given within 48 hours of the onset of flu symptoms. These flu drugs can decrease the duration of the flu by one day if used within this early time period. They are usually given for about five days.

Your doctor will determine if you can take antiviral drugs with a flu diagnosis, but you need to call your doctor as soon as you have flu symptoms for these drugs to provide a benefit.

**If you would like more information, please contact  
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