

# **Influenza vs. Gastroenteritis**

## **Influenza Symptoms**

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

## **How Flu Spreads**

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

## **Period of Contagiousness**

You may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days **after** becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

## **Preventing Flu**

The first and most important step in preventing flu is to **get a flu vaccination** each year. CDC also recommends everyday preventive actions (like staying away from people who are sick, covering coughs and sneezes and frequent handwashing) to help slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses, like flu.

## **Gastroenteritis Symptoms**

Norovirus causes many people to become ill with vomiting and diarrhea each year. Noroviruses are a group of related viruses that can cause gastroenteritis, which is inflammation of the stomach and intestines.

- cramping
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea
  
- low-grade fever
- chills
- headache
- muscle aches
- fatigue

## **How Gastroenteritis Spreads**

Norovirus spreads quickly. It is found in the vomit and stool of infected people. You can get it by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus
- Touching surfaces or objects with norovirus on them and then putting your hand or fingers in your mouth
- Having direct contact with a person who is infected with norovirus, for example, when caring for someone with norovirus or sharing foods or eating utensils with them

## **Period of Contagiousness**

People with norovirus illness are contagious from the moment they begin feeling sick and for the first few days after they recover. Some people may be contagious for even longer.

## **Preventing Gastroenteritis**

You can help protect yourself and others by washing your hands often and following simple tips to stay healthy. *There is no vaccine to prevent norovirus infection or drug to treat sick people.*

**Whether you are experiencing signs and symptoms of either influenza or gastroenteritis you must isolate yourself for at least 48 hours after symptoms have subsided.**