

SELF-HELP LEAFLET FOR

FLU AND FLU-LIKE ILLNESS

WHAT IS THE CAUSE?

Colds and flu are caused by viruses. The infection is contagious, passed on by tiny droplets in the air and by hand contact. Many other viruses can cause an illness similar to flu. A diagnosis of a “flu-like illness” is very common.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Fever (high temperature), sweats, muscle aches, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache and tiredness are all typical. You may also feel sick. Symptoms develop quickly. Even if you are young and fit, flu can make you ill enough to need to go to bed. Symptoms usually peak after 1-2 days and then gradually wear off over several days. Most people recover within 14 days.

HOW CAN I REDUCE MY RISK AND PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY?

You can reduce, but not eliminate the risk of catching or spreading flu by:

- * always covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible
- * disposing of used tissues promptly and carefully – bag them or bin them – they contain active viruses
- * maintain good basic hygiene – wash your hands frequently with soap and water. This will reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face or on to surfaces and to other people
- * cleaning hard surfaces (kitchen worktops/door handles) frequently, using a normal cleaning product
- * making sure your children follow this advice

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR FLU AND FLU-LIKE ILLNESSES?

It is not necessary to see the doctor about a normal cold. Remember antibiotics do not work on cold and flu viruses

In a healthy adult flu is unpleasant and inconvenient and you may feel absolutely rotten but it is nothing to worry about

IF I CATCH FLU WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- * Stay at home, rest, keep it to yourself
- * Take medicines such as Aspirin, Ibuprofen or Paracetamol to relieve symptoms (follow the instructions on the medicines).
- * Ask the Pharmacist for advice on what is best for your particular symptoms
- * Drink plenty of fluids

Remember:

Treatment aims to ease the symptoms
The body’s immune system usually fights off viruses that cause flu and flu-like illnesses.
Antibiotics do not kill viruses.