

With all the media attention to the season flu (with an annual fatality rate of over 30,000 in the United States each year) and the H1N1 flu (that has claimed over 100 lives), it is easy to be a little anxious about getting sick. So what if you have some of the following symptoms? Which do you have?

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny/Stuffy nose
- Headache/ Body aches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

These symptoms sound like a they could be either a simple cold, the seasonal flu, and/or the H1N1 flu (swine flu). How do you know which one is getting you down? The answer is not that hard to determine. If you have a fever, it is most likely not a cold. (See the list of cold symptoms from [webmd here](#).) If you have all of the above, it is probably a type of flu. If you would like to hear (and see) a report about the symptoms of the H1N1 (swine) flu from the Centers for Disease Control, here's a link to their most recent [YouTube video](#).

If your symptoms are mild, it might not matter. Many people will have mild cases of a cold, flu, and/or the H1N1 flu and will make a full recovery. If you are unsure about how sick you are or are not, you should seek medical advise, but may not need to go to an emergency room. A doctor may prescribe anti-viral drugs that will ease the symptoms and help you to feel better.

Some people who have pre-existing conditions, such as heart problems, diabetes, blood or immune deficiencies, are pregnant or under 5 or over 65 can be especially affected by the flu. If you fall into any of these categories, you should talk to your health care provider if you have flu symptoms.

It is important that with any infectious or contagious disease, you avoid spreading it. This includes covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and staying home. The Centers for Disease Control recommends staying home from work or school for 24 hours after your fever has gone.

When should you be concerned about your symptoms? The following are warning signs that you have a more severe case and should seek

emergency medical care:

- Fast or troubled breathing
- Bluish skin color (if a child)
- Not getting enough fluids (if a child)
- Can't wake up or unable to interact (if a child)
- A child being so irritable they do not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms that improve, but come back with fever and a worse cough
- A fever with a rash (if a child)
- Pain or pressure in the chest (if an adult)
- Sudden dizziness or confusion (if an adult)
- Severe or persistent vomiting (if an adult)

How do you keep from getting sick? Good personal hygiene is the first step. Wash your hands often, especially before and after using a restroom. Wash your hands before touching anything that will go in your mouth. Stay well hydrated, and plan meals that are well balanced and healthy. Some reports encourage brisk walking to improve immune systems. If possible, get a flu shot.

The other thing to do is to use common sense. If you know someone who is exhibiting these symptoms, stay away from them. If you have these symptoms, play it safe and stay home. Don't risk making things worse by trying to go to work.

Stay on top of the latest information about the seasonal and/or swine flu through the Centers for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>. Another good resource is <http://www.flu.gov/> (both linked here).