

Health Bulletin

Can You Tell The Difference Between Cold And Flu?

(NAPSA)—You may have warm memories of staying home sick as a child: your mother making tea and caring for you while you stayed in bed for days. For your health, however, it's best to put those cherished memories to bed. The flu is far more serious than a cold. It doesn't matter how much chicken soup you eat, soup won't treat the flu.

Linda Davis-Alldritt, president of the National Association of School Nurses, explains how to recognize flu symptoms and prevent and treat the virus.

Can you tell the difference between cold and flu? According to a survey, one in four Americans have trouble telling the difference between the two.

"That's a major problem when it comes to the flu. You need to know it's not just a cold or allergies," said Davis-Alldritt. "There is a great memory tool that everyone should learn to help them remember the specific symptoms of the flu. Think flu facts: F.A.C.T.S. stands for fever, aches, chills, tiredness and sudden onset."

How do you fight the flu?

The flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine. However, last year a substantial percent of Americans did not get a flu vaccine (57 percent). This leaves most people unprotected against the flu virus.

"If you have flu symptoms such as a high fever and aches, it's important to see your doctor quickly," Davis-Alldritt explains. "There are prescription medicines that directly target the flu virus that might be able to help you."

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When the flu virus strikes, a cup of soup won't do.

Unlike a cold, there are prescription medicines for flu, so it is important to see your doctor at the first sign of flu symptoms.

If you catch the flu, what should you do?

If you do get sick with the flu, there are simple ways to stop the spread of germs.

First, know that you are contagious, so avoid that hug or handshake. Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

The virus can travel up to six feet every time a person with flu sneezes or coughs, so be sure to cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. "Of course, visit your doctor quickly to see if it's the flu," Davis-Alldritt added.

For more information, visit www.FluFACTS.com. There you can check your symptoms, track the flu in the area and download a free "Fight the Flu" iPhone app.