# Symptoms of Colds, Flu, Pneumonia and Meningitis

**Symptoms** of colds, flu, pneumonia and meningitis can be similar. Mistaking one for the other could mean an extended illness and serious complications. How do you know what you have?

**Colds** are inconvenient but usually not serious and can be treated at home. Symptoms may last 4-14 days and include:
- Runny nose and/or sneezing
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Head and body aches
- Low fever (less than 101°F/38.3°C)
- Congestion of the ears, nose, throat and head

**Flu** typically hits in Michigan December-March. Acute symptoms last 3-4 days, and cough may linger for 3 weeks. Gastrointestinal symptoms are rare. Complications are uncommon in young, otherwise healthy adults. Symptoms include:
- Rapid onset of symptoms
- High fever (greater than 101°F/38.3°C)
- Severe body aches and/or headache
- Dry cough
- Extreme fatigue
- Chills

**Pneumonia** can be serious and even fatal. See a clinician if you experience symptoms:
- High fever (greater than 101°F/38.3°C)
- Cough that produces thick, brown or bloody phlegm
- Chills
- Chest pain while breathing

**Meningitis** requires immediate medical care. Early diagnosis and treatment is critical. Meningitis can be caused by viruses or bacteria, and bacterial meningitis can be fatal if untreated. If you experience meningitis symptoms, consult your clinician or go to an emergency room immediately. Symptoms include:
- High fever (greater than 101°F/38.3°C)
- Severe, sudden headache accompanied by any of the following:
  - Mental changes (e.g. agitation or confusion)
  - Neck or back stiffness
  - Rash on your body (commonly the armpits, groin, ankles)

---

## When to Seek Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMPTOMS:</th>
<th>SELF CARE OK:</th>
<th>GET MEDICAL CARE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>• Scratchy throat • Can swallow liquids • Minor gland swelling</td>
<td>• Difficulty swallowing liquids • White/yellow spots in throat • Increased pain after 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>Less than 101°F (38.3°C)</td>
<td>Higher than 101°F (38.3°C) more than 3 days • Fluctuates above 101°F several times a day • Shaking chills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Dry cough</td>
<td>Persistent cough • Chest pain • Wheezing • Shortness of breath • Foul smelling, brown, bloody phlegm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runny nose Sneezing</td>
<td>• Relatively clear drainage • Mild sinus/facial discomfort</td>
<td>Foul smelling, brown, bloody phlegm • Severe sinus/facial discomfort</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Headache**

- Mild pain
- Pain that improves with non-prescription pain reliever (acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
- • Blurred vision, dizziness • Nausea, vomiting • Stiffness in neck or back • Mental agitation/confusion • Severe headache with fever greater than 101°F (38.3°C) & rash anywhere on body

**Body aches**

- General aches
- Persistent abdominal pain

**Fatigue**

- General tiredness
- Excessive fatigue

**Earache**

- Stuffy/clogged ears
- Pain/discharge from ears

---

**CALL UHS for ADVICE**

**WEEKDAYS** 734-764-8320
**NIGHTS & WEEKENDS** 866-204-1082 (for URGENT concerns)

**Appointment Scheduling** 734-764-8320