



Health Notes

from the Lilydale Pharmacy

Flu or cold?

The flu season is on the way again, and many people are having their annual flu immunisation. People with chronic heart, kidney or lung disease, diabetes or other long-term illnesses are particularly vulnerable. The stress caused by influenza can worsen these conditions and even cause premature death.

A cold tends to have significant head symptoms like sore throat, blocked nose and sinus congestion. Fever, headaches and muscle pains are mild. Cough and chest discomfort are usually mild to moderate. Flu tends to hit suddenly with significant fever, chills, muscle pains and exhaustion for a few days. Cough and chest discomfort can be severe, with bronchitis or pneumonia. Head symptoms like sore throat and blocked nose are uncommon. The illness may last for 10 days or longer.

Viruses cause colds and flus, so antibiotics are not required. Treatment for colds and flu is symptomatic only. You won't get better any faster with the treatments, but at least you can feel better while you are recovering. It usually takes 7 to 10 days to recover, so if you aren't better after this time – or start to feel ill again, then you may have caught a secondary infection. These are often bacterial and can be treated with antibiotics from your doctor.

If you are over 65 years old you will qualify for a free flu immunisation from your doctor. Everyone else will need a prescription. This costs \$3.80 for health care card holders, and \$21.55 for others.

No immunisation is 100% effective, but the flu immunisation will prevent 70-90% of cases. There is no live virus in the injection, so it does not cause influenza. It takes about 2 weeks for your body to build the antibodies after you have had the immunisation. People who catch the flu in that fortnight tend to mistakenly blame the immunisation for causing flu. Don't wait for the outbreak to happen before you have your shot!