

News release

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For immediate release

COLD OR FLU? YOU DECIDE...

A new leaflet - *Handy Advice about Flu and Colds* - from the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCT Cluster can help you decide whether you have a cold or flu as well as help you understand and manage your symptoms this Self Care Week (14-20 November 2011).

On average, adults can expect two colds a year and children as many as 10, until they develop immunity. Sometimes bad colds can be mistaken for flu, but how do you tell the difference?

Flu's biggest symptom is a sudden high temperature of over 38 degrees Celsius and a sudden cough. Other symptoms include headache, chills, aching muscles, limb or joint pain, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, loss of appetite and diarrhoea or stomach upset.

A cold on the other hand may present some of the same symptoms but these will appear at different stages. Usually, with a cold adults will not run a high temperature, but children might.

Dr Tim Davies, deputy director of public health, speaking on behalf of the cluster, advised: "Try not to attend A&E as there's nothing the healthcare professionals there can do for colds and flu and you run the risk of spreading the virus to other patients.

"The best thing you can do is rest, drink plenty of fluids and help ease sore throats with cough lozenges, mixtures or sprays. Make sure you check with your pharmacist whether any cold or flu remedies can be used with medication you're already taking."

Day 1-2

If you have **flu** this is the time when you will have a high temperature and symptoms that come on quickly. You will be shivering with a headache, muscle aches in the back and legs and you may feel dizzy. The high temperature should go down within 48 hours.

If you have a **cold**, this is the incubation stage, and there are no symptoms to tell you that you have been infected.

Days 2-3

If you have **flu**, your temperature should be dropping now and from here on your symptoms will be similar to those you get with colds.

If you have a **cold**, the first signs appear on day two with a tickle or soreness in the nose and/or throat and sometimes in the eyes. The sore throat gets worse and a dry cough might start. You start sneezing and your nose starts to run.

Days 3-5

From day three the symptoms for both flu and colds are very similar. The discharge from the nose may change from clear and watery to thicker and yellowish in colour. Your nose starts to feel very stuffy and blocked up, and you might get pain in the forehead and around and behind the eyes. If the infection is a really nasty one, adults may still have a slight fever.

Days 5 - 14+

Symptoms should be starting to subside and you should start to feel better.

Your local pharmacy will have all the advice and treatment you need. You should only contact your GP if you think you have flu and you:

- have a serious underlying illness;
- if you are pregnant;
- if you have a sick child under one year old;
- if your condition suddenly gets much worse or your condition is still getting worse after seven days (or five days for a child).

The important things to remember are:

- Have a free flu jab at your GP surgery if you are over 65; have an underlying health condition; are pregnant or care for someone that has a an underlying health condition.
- Don't expect antibiotics. They won't work. Colds and flu are caused by viruses and antibiotics only work on bacterial infections.
- Keep paracetamol or ibuprofen-based pain and fever treatment or cold remedies in the house. They will help with the symptoms of both colds and flu.
- Sneeze into a tissue and put it straight in the bin – don't carry it around to reuse over and over again!
- Have good hand hygiene – always wash hands with soap and water, particularly after sneezing and blowing your nose. Take the time to dry them properly as wet hands harbour and spread germs.
- Keep surfaces clean.

To download the *Handy Advice about Flu and Colds* leaflet visit:

<http://www.leicestercity.nhs.uk/YourHealth-Healthyliving-SeasonalFlu.aspx>

ENDS

For interviews or more information please contact media officer Liz Thomas on 0116 295 7677 or liz.thomas@leicestercity.nhs.uk or senior media officer Caroline Higgs on 0116 295 7663 or caroline.higgs@lcr.nhs.uk.

Notes to editor:

In October 2010 NHS Leicester City and NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland joined forces to form a 'cluster', in line with the requirements of the Department of Health. Although we share one Cluster Board and our staff work across the city and county boundaries, we have not legally merged, and retain our separate statutory duties. Together we serve a population of more than a million people. Cluster formation is an interim stage in the reform of the NHS, involving on-going transfer of most local commissioning functions to GP-led clinical commissioning groups, in line with the Health and Social Care Bill, now before Parliament and the House of Lords.