

HEALTHY BODY/HEALTHY MIND

Common treatments for flu and colds

Appella
Bridges,
R.N.



Highly contagious, influenza (flu) strikes millions of people each year, keeping them from work and school and sending some to the hospital with complications.

The flu is an acute upper respiratory tract infection caused by a myxovirus - type A, B, or C. Type A and B change their genetic makeup slightly each year, which causes the ineffectiveness of previously developed vaccines and immunity.

Influenza affects all age groups but its effects are severest, even life-threatening, in elderly adults, very young children, and persons with chronic disorders.

The virus can survive for up to 72 hours outside the body. It is carried through the air or by person-to-person contact, making objects handled by a person with the flu a source of infec-

tion, such as door handles and telephones.

At the onset of illness one may experience a fever, sore throat, dry cough, runny nose, and sneezing, accompanied by red, watery eyes; muscle aches in the lower back and legs and headaches. The symptoms should subside in 3 to 4 days although tiredness and weakness may persist.

The flu virus decreases resistance to secondary infections. For this reason a doctor should be seen if symptoms last more than a week, become more severe, localize in the throat, lungs, or ears, vomiting or behavioral changes are experienced.

If complications should take you to a doctor, cultures of the back of the throat, blood test or a chest x-ray may be ordered. On the other hand, rest, plenty of fluids (2 to 3 quarts a day), aspirin or acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be ordered if the patient is not on a blood thinner or has stomach problems. Your doctor may also prescribe an antibiotic (if there is a sec-

ondary bacterial infection) and cough medicine if needed. Those in high risk categories may need to obtain a yearly flu vaccine. A patient should stay in bed and rest if there is a fever and for 1 to 2 days after the fever subsides. Increasing activity too soon may lead to another bout of fever and flu. Remember that aspirin should never be given to a child or teenager because of the danger of Reyes syndrome.

For less severe symptoms your doctor may recommend an antihistamine that may be used to dry up congested lungs and relieve watery eyes, a runny nose, and sneezing. Most of these drugs cause sleepiness, if you take them avoid activities that require alertness, such as using power tools, machinery or driving a motor vehicle. An antitussive (cough suppressant) and expectorant may also be recommended. Consider using decongestant nasal sprays or drops. They are safer than liquids or tablets because little of the drug enters your bloodstream when directly applied to your nose. Take only one cold remedy at a

time and never take a cold remedy with a prescription drug without getting the OK from your doctor first.

A patient with the flu may feel more comfortable with a humidifier or a vaporizer in the room. By adding moisture to the air that is breathed, the drying effects of the flu may be avoided. Thorough hand washing with warm soapy water should be performed frequently to prevent transmission of the virus. Remember always to cover nose and mouth with tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of tissues by wrapping them in a plastic bag or by flushing them down the toilet.

A good measure for avoiding the flu is to stay away from crowds and away from persons with the flu during the flu season. If you are into homeopathic (herbal, natural, organic) remedies; Alpha CF, Goldenseal, or Echinacea tea may prove helpful. Always make your doctor aware that you are taking homeopathic remedies. These are available at Kamit Natural Food Store (704-339-0038).

Exercise, cold medicines don't mix

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - Exercising with a cold is tough enough. Exercising with cold medications may make things even tougher.

Side effects of many over-the-counter and prescription drugs may add to the strength-sapping effects of the illness, doctors say. And, although the combination of exercise and drugs doesn't create new side effects, it can make the standard ones more noticeable, they say.

For instance, common decongestants containing such substances as epinephrine can raise the resting heart rate, said Dr. Thomas L. Schwenk of the University of Michigan Medical School. And OTC cold preparations almost always have antihistamines which can make some people feel drowsy, he said. One such compound is astemizole.

"They don't balance each other out," Schwenk said. "You can feel low motivation while your heart rate is up."

The more hard-driving the athlete, the more noticeable the effect could be, said Schwenk, who summarized some of the drug reactions in the medical journal *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*.

Competitive athletes are most likely to tell a difference in their performance, Schwenk said. Serious non-competitive athletes probably would notice it, but recreational athletes might just think, "I'm not feeling well," he said.

And the effect also varies from person to person, whether or not they exercise, said Dr. Gary I. Wadler of New York University. Some people "get really shaky and get insomnia," he said. "Others will take (a drug) and have no effects except their nose stops running."

The only way to know is to try some and see what happens, Wadler said. To avoid having your experiment hurt performance, try it when you are not planning to exercise,

he said.

Athletes who get prescription medication after seeing a doctor may also have similar problems, said Dr. Douglas B. McKeag of the University of Pittsburgh. Many prescription drugs have side effects similar to the less-powerful OTC products, he said. For instance, prescription decongestants may speed up the resting heart rate, he said.

For an aerobic athlete, that's bad news, McKeag said: "You achieve your maximal heart rate a lot sooner, and you get tired a lot quicker."

Antibiotics such as erythromycin don't affect exercise performance. But they can in some cases cause fatal heart-beat irregularities when combined with other drugs such as astemizole, which is sold in such products as Hismanal.

Athletes who are looking for guidance on what drugs to take will have to ask a lot of questions, the doctors say. Physicians don't think to ask about exercise habits when prescribing cold or flu medica-

tions, and athletes who buy nonprescription medications had better get used to reading labels, they say.

There may be times when it is wiser to just skip the workout, the doctors say. "The general advice is to assess whether you have symptoms from the neck up or the neck down," Schwenk said.

It's considered safe to exercise with neck-up symptoms such as runny noses, sneezing and coughs due to drainage, Schwenk said. But athletes should bear in mind that their performance will be worse, so they ought to cut back.

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Around Charlotte

Haze Moore has been selected first runner up for the "Outstanding Educator Award" sponsored by the African American Cultural Complex. Moore, an assistant principal at Bruns Avenue Elementary School, will be honored Feb. 22 at the North Carolina Association of Educators in Raleigh.



Moore

Focus on Leadership, a developmental program designed to increase the pool of African American leaders in Charlotte, is accepting nominations for its annual Unsung Heroes Awards Gala and Diamond Reception. Activist and author Tavis Smiley will be the keynote speaker. Nominations close March 3. For more information, call 559-4191.

Basics and Learning Center, a professional tutoring center will present a motivational seminar on engineering Sunday at the Independence Office Park, Suite 210. Preregistration is required. The facilitator will be Sylvia Middleton, Ph.D., an associate dean for the College of Engineering at UNC Charlotte. For more information, call 537-0322.

National Council of Negro Women will host National African American Parent

Involvement Day, Monday. NAAPID is a national call for parents to become more involved in their children's education.

Carmel Middle School will host a Career Fair Wednesday from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Local business will be able to set up booths and display information, advertisements and equipment representative of your field. For more information, call 343-8709.

Poet Dot Thompson will read her poems and the works of other poets featured in "My Soul is a Witness: African American Women's Spirituality" Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, 10701 Centrum Parkway, Pineville.

Upcoming events

Mecklenburg County Women's Commission will host "Jazz Up Your Life" with Newton and Wanda Thomas, Feb. 14 at noon at 55 S. McDowell Street. Reservations are required. For more information, call 336-6094.

The National Council of Negro Women, will also sponsor a Brotherhood Dinner Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at McDonald's Cafeteria, 2810 Beatties Ford Road. The guest speaker will be Robert Davis, president of the Black Political Caucus. For more information, call Mattie Caldwell at 376-9955 or Thomasina Johnson at 375-8263.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Charlotte will

sponsor a self-esteem workshop Feb. 15 at 9 a.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, 4519 Providence Road. The workshop is open to youth age 10-18, who have learning disabilities. The registration fee is \$45.

The Community Youth Conference kick off Feb. 15 at 2 p.m. at Founders Hall. Workshops will be held Feb. 22 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Grady Cole Center. A social will be held at 3 p.m. For more information, call Linda Butler, 598-3988, Dee Dee Licorish, 512-0140 or Robert Harris, 336-8282.

Pisgah Lodge 266, Pisgah Temple 228 and Isabelle F. Hyder Temple 1279 will present the Annual Red and White Dance Feb. 15 at 9 p.m. at American Legion Post 380, 4300 Tyvola Road. Donations are \$10.

Discovery Place will host National Engineers Week Feb. 17-22. Events include paper cup skyscraper and a building block contests and a technical drawing contest for 9th through 12th graders. For more information, call 372-6261, extension 302.

New Outlook, a program that helps women get acclimated to social settings, will dedicate its center Sunday at 1:30 p.m.

The center, located at 3623 Central Ave. near Eastway Drive, helps recovering addicts and inmates build self-esteem as they prepare for a return to social and work situations.

For more information, call 536-7600.

BIG LEAGUE SPORTS ARE HERE



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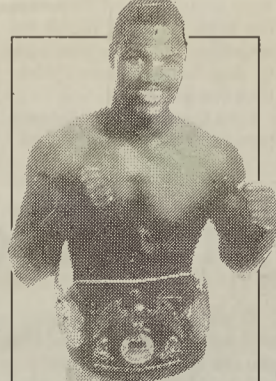
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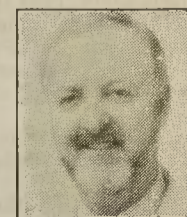
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