

# Colds, the Flu and More ...



**Q&A** What is the difference between a cold and the flu? Are they both contagious?

A cold presents as a runny nose, cough, and a fever of a short duration, whereas the flu makes one much sicker, with high fevers, diffuse body-aches, cough, and is highly contagious. Influenza is mostly transmitted by the droplet method (the wet spray that comes out of your nose and mouth). That is why it is so important to cover your mouth and your nose when you cough or sneeze and to regularly wash your hands.

**Q&A** Why do I have to get a flu vaccine every year?

Immunity from the flu virus wanes with time, and also the strains change periodically, so last year's vaccine may not be effective the next year. Therefore, it is very important to get a flu vaccine every year.

**Q&A** Someone told me that only children can get whooping cough. Is this true?

No, that is not true. Several adults have suffered from whooping cough, especially if they were not immunized as children, or if they are older and their immunity to the vaccine has declined. There is a vaccine available, called TDap, that can boost immunity against whooping cough in adults.

**Q&A** If I had chicken pox as a child is it possible to catch them again? What is the connection between chicken pox and shingles?

While the Varicella virus that causes chicken pox gives lifelong immunity to the generalized rash known as chicken pox, the virus can remain latent in nerves and reactivate at a later age, causing zoster or shingles, a painful and debilitating illness. Shingles is usually restricted to localized areas or single dermatomes (an area of skin that is mainly supplied by a single spinal nerve).

## Meet our Expert

Vibha Sharma, MD



Dr. Sharma is board certified in internal medicine and infectious diseases and is on staff at Marlborough Hospital. She is a graduate of the Minsk State Medical Institute and was fellowship trained in infectious diseases at UMass Memorial Medical Center. Her residencies were completed at UMass Memorial Medical Center; New York University (NYU) Medical Center and the NYU/Veterans Affairs Hospital.

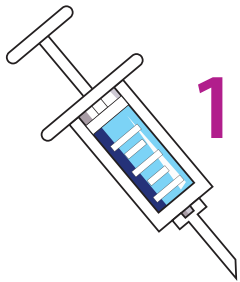
**Q&A**

Washing your hands helps to stop the spread of infections such as “stomach bugs,” but which works better: soap and water or alcohol-based hand gels?

Both work well, but soap and water is more effective for certain bugs like Norovirus or clostridium difficile, which can be a deadly infection, usually after antibiotic usage in adults.

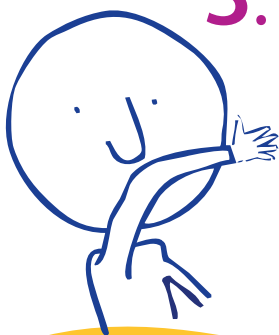
## Fight the Flu

For our patients and each other



**1. Get a flu shot.**

**2. Wash your hands.**



**3. Sneeze into the crook of your elbow.**

## About Marlborough Hospital



Marlborough Hospital, a community resource since 1890, is served by a medical staff of more than 300 primary care physicians and specialists. The hospital provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient medical, surgical and ancillary services, including oncology, laboratory and radiology services, physical therapy, cardiac rehabilitation, inpatient and partial day mental health services, as well as diabetes education and management. A state-of-the-art emergency department, staffed by emergency medicine physicians from UMass Memorial Medical Center, provides 24-hour emergency care. For more information about the hospital please visit: [www.marlbroughhospital.org](http://www.marlbroughhospital.org).



**Marlborough Hospital**

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