“Oh no—I think I have the flu! Now what?!”

How to treat influenza, a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses

For most healthy people, flu resolves on its own and requires only supportive care, like rest, fluids and over-the-counter medications to reduce fever. However, some people who have certain health conditions may benefit from anti-viral medication.

What is antiviral medication and how can it help?
Medications such as Tamiflu and Relenza are used to prevent or treat flu viruses. They may, in some instances, decrease the amount of time you are sick with the flu by about one day. According to Infectious Disease experts, “there is only about a 24 hour benefit in healthy, young adults.” Antiviral medications work best when started within the first two days of getting sick.

Which conditions may predispose me to having complications from the flu?
- Very young age (<2 years old) or very old age (>65 years old)
- Conditions that affect the immune system
- Asthma
- Pregnancy
- Obesity (BMI >40)

Do I need antibiotics?
Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections. They are not effective against viral infections like the flu. Some people have bacterial infections along with or caused by the flu and will need to take antibiotics. Severe or prolonged illness or illness that seems to get better but then gets worse may be a sign of bacterial infection. Call Student Health at 215.746.3535 if you think you need antibiotics.