While it has not become an epidemic in California so far, cases of the flu are now widespread in the state.

Fever, runny nose, fatigue, headache and muscle aches are symptoms shared by both the common cold and influenza. Here are some clues as to which is which.

Common Cold Symptoms (tend to develop gradually):

• Runny, stuffy nose

• Scatchy throat

- Sneezing
- Watery Eyes
- Little or no fever

Influenza Symptoms (can appear suddenly without warning):

- Nausea
- Cough without phlegm
- Chills, body aches
- Fever (above 102°F) although not everyone with the flu will develop a fever
- Extreme tiredness
- Vomiting (more common in children)
- Diarrhea

It’s important to remember that flu viruses can live on non-porous surfaces (such as plastic and stainless steel) for up to 48 hours. Researchers say the average adult touches about 30 objects each minute.

Such high-traffic areas as refrigerator handles, microwave ovens and other kitchen surfaces, phones, TV remotes, door handles, light switches and grocery carts can harbor viruses, which is why the two most important steps you can take to help prevent getting the flu are to wash or sanitize your hands and to get the flu vaccination.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, everyone 6 months and older should get vaccinated for the flu each and every year — and it’s not too late in the season to do so.

— Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, flu.gov