

COLDS & FLU



IS IT *JUST* A COLD, OR DO YOU HAVE THE FLU ?

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE ?

The common cold and flu are both respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses.^{1a} Influenza (flu) is caused by influenza viruses which circulate in all parts of the world.^{2a}

Colds and flu share many similar symptoms, so it can be difficult to tell the difference between them.^{1b} In general, cold symptoms are usually milder than the symptoms of flu and do not result in serious health problem such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalisations. Flu can have very serious associated complications.^{1c}

CAUSES & TRANSMISSION

The flu and other respiratory viruses are easily spread especially in crowded areas including schools and nursing homes. When an infected person coughs or sneezes, droplets containing the virus are dispersed into the air and can infect persons in close proximity who breathe these droplets in.^{2b}

The virus can also be spread by contaminated hands.^{2b}

To prevent transmission, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing, and wash your hands regularly.^{2b}

WHO IS AT RISK ?

The flu is seasonal mainly occurring during winter.^{2c} The time from infection to illness, known as the incubation period, is about 2 days, but ranges from one to four days.^{2d}

All age groups can be affected but there are groups that are more at risk than others.^{2e}

- Children under 5 years
- The elderly
- People with chronic medical conditions
- People with immune suppression
- Healthcare workers

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Symptom onset is gradual with a common cold and with flu it can be more abrupt. The main differences are:^{1d}

Symptom	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Usual
Aches	Rare	Usual
Chills	Uncommon	Fairly Common
Fatigue, Weakness	Sometimes	Usual
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort, Cough	Sometimes	Common
Headache	Rare	Common

TREATMENT & LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS

People with uncomplicated seasonal influenza or a common cold can be managed with herbal or medicinal products that treats the symptoms.^{2f,3a} People are advised, if symptomatic, to stay home in order to minimise the risk of infecting others in the community.^{3a}

There are many different types of treatments available to manage cold and flu symptoms, usually available from pharmacies, supermarkets or health shops. Your pharmacist or healthcare provider can advise you on the type of treatment that suits you best.



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Nose	Head	Cough	Sore Throat	Immunity	Inflammation
Decongestants or saline nasal drops/spray relieve a blocked or stuffy nose ^{3b,c}	Painkillers and anti-inflammatories treat a headache, fever or body ache. ^{3d} Examples include <i>paracetamol</i> and <i>ibuprofen</i> . ^{3d}	Cough mixtures can help relieve a cough. ^{3a}	Salt gargles or lozenges can soothe a sore throat. ^{3a}	Immune boosters and vitamin D can help enhance immunity against infection. ^{4a,b}	Natural or herbal medicines can be used for their antiviral effects, ability to fight inflammation and to support immune system. ^{4c,5a-d,6a} Examples include <i>echinacea</i> , ^{4a,b} <i>elderberry extract</i> ^{4a,c} and <i>pelargonium sidoides</i> . ^{5b,d}

Ask your pharmacist or wellness clinic for appropriate choices to treat your symptoms. Combination products are available to treat multiple symptoms.

HEALTHY PREVENTATIVE TIPS:^{2g}

- Regular hand washing with proper drying of the hands.
- Good respiratory hygiene – covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, using tissues and disposing of them correctly.
- Early self-isolation of those feeling unwell, feverish and having other symptoms of influenza.
- Avoiding close contact with sick people.
- Avoiding touching one's eyes, nose or mouth.

For more information, refer to your Healthcare Professional.

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