

The facts about colds and the flu

The common cold and the flu are both caused by viruses.

Over 200 different viruses can cause colds. Fewer viruses cause the flu, which is why there's a shot available for the flu but not for colds. Ask your healthcare provider if a flu shot is right for you.

How do I know what I have?

Colds can happen any time, but the flu is more common in winter. In general, cold symptoms are milder than flu symptoms.

COLD

*Symptoms develop slowly
Can last 2-14 days*

Can include:

Fever up to 102°F

Runny or stuffy nose
(with green or yellow discharge)

Fatigue

Cough

Muscle aches

Headache

Sore throat

Sneezing

Watery eyes

FLU

*Symptoms develop quickly
Most can last 2-7 days, but cough
and tiredness can last for 2-3 weeks*

Can include:

Fever over 102°F

Stuffy nose

Fatigue

Cough

Muscle aches
(especially in back, arms and legs)

Headache

Nausea

Chills and sweats

Loss of appetite

How to treat your cold or flu virus

Antibiotics don't kill viruses. (Antibiotics may only be needed if you have a bacterial infection.)
But there are ways to treat your cold and flu symptoms.

Get lots of rest, especially while you have a fever. Rest helps your body fight infection.

Drink lots of fluids such as water and clear soup. Fluids help loosen mucus and prevent dehydration.

Soothe a sore throat by gargling with warm salt water a few times a day. Also, throat spray or lozenges may help relieve the pain.

Use saline (salt water) nose drops. They help loosen mucus and moisten tender skin in the nose.

Avoid alcohol and tobacco. Smoke can make cold symptoms worse.

Take TYLENOL® for fever, body aches, sore throat and headache. TYLENOL® is the #1-recommended brand of pain reliever for the aches and fever of colds and flu, and won't irritate your stomach the way that aspirin, naproxen, or even ibuprofen can.

Call your healthcare provider if:

- you are 65 years old or older, pregnant, or if you have a chronic medical condition such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease
- your illness seems severe

Antiviral medicines may help if you are very sick with the flu or at high risk for flu complications, but they work best if started within 2 days of when your symptoms began.



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