

A Guide for the Cold and Flu Season

Tips and Facts for Staying Healthy

Is it a Cold or the Flu?

Cold

A cold is an upper respiratory infection that can be caused by many different viruses. A cold is contagious during the first 3 days of illness, and usually lasts about a week. **Usually comes on gradually.**

Fever Rare in adults or older children but can be as high as 102°F in infants and small children.

Headache Rare

Muscle Aches Mild

Tiredness/Weakness Mild

Extreme Exhaustion Never

Runny Nose Often

Sneezing Often

Sore Throat Often

Cough Mild, hacking

The best treatment for a cold is to rest and drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Avoid using alcohol and tobacco.

Talk to your doctor about over-the-counter medications which can help you feel better.

Antibiotics don't work on viral infections, including colds and the flu.

Never give aspirin to children or teenagers without first speaking to your healthcare provider.

Flu

Influenza (the flu) is a highly contagious viral infection that affects the lungs and sinuses. A person with influenza can be contagious for 1 day prior to and 5 days after becoming ill. **Usually comes on suddenly.**

Fever Usually 102°F, but can rise to 104°F and usually lasts 3 to 4 days.

Headache Sudden onset, can be severe

Muscle Aches Usual, often severe

Tiredness/Weakness Can last 2 or more weeks

Extreme Exhaustion Sudden onset, can be severe

Runny Nose Sometimes

Sneezing Sometimes

Sore Throat Sometimes

Cough Often, can become severe

If you get the flu, get plenty of rest, drink a lot of liquids, and avoid using alcohol and tobacco.

Talk to your doctor about antiviral prescriptions to treat the flu; ideally they should be started in the first two days of illness.

Be aware. Flu can lead to bronchitis and pneumonia, and can be life-threatening. See "When to seek medical care."

Stay home until symptoms are gone and you have been free of fever (less than 100°F without the use of fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol or Advil) for at least 24 hours.

Tips for Preventing Colds & Flu

Get a flu vaccine each year to prevent the flu.

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze, cough, or blow your nose. Throw away used tissues, then wash your hands.

If you don't have a tissue, **cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow** - not into your hands.

Regularly clean surfaces in your home that are touched often like light switches, doorknobs, faucets and appliance handles.

Don't share food, utensils, beverages, towels, lipstick, toys, cigarettes, or anything else that might be contaminated with germs.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs can spread by touching them.

Avoid close contact with sick people. Most germs are spread when a sick person coughs, sneezes or talks.

Stay at home if you have:

- A fever of 100°F or more or a severe cough with a fever
- A sore throat with fever or difficulty swallowing
- Diarrhea or vomiting

Wear a mask in a medical office, if asked.

Always follow your doctor's instructions and take your medicine as prescribed.



Who Needs A Flu Vaccine?

Everyone, every year.

Everyone age 6 months and older should get an annual flu vaccine. For best protection, get vaccinated as soon as vaccine is available, usually by October.

People more likely to get flu complications:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- People who are more than 100 lbs. overweight
- Pregnant women

The flu can also worsen some chronic health problems, such as:

- Asthma
- Chronic lung disease
- Heart disease
- Blood disorders
- Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions
- Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)
- Kidney, liver, and metabolic disorders
- Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or long-term steroid treatment)
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

When To Seek Medical Care

Seek medical care right away if the sick person:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Has purple or blue colored skin or lips
- Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- Has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, not urinating, or dry skin, mouth or eyes
- Has seizures (uncontrolled convulsions)
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

Caution: Over the counter medications taken to relieve symptoms can interfere with other medications. Always consult your pharmacist first.

