

Cold or Flu?

The common cold and the flu can be alike in many ways. They are both caused by viruses and are spread from person to person through the air and from contact with shared objects.

Signs and Symptoms of Influenza vs “Common Cold”

Signs and Symptoms	Influenza	Cold
Onset	Sudden	Gradual
Fever	> 101 °F, lasting 3-4 days	None or < 101 °F
Cough	Dry, sometimes severe	Hacking
Headache	Prominent	Rare
Body Aches	Typical, severe	Uncommon or mild
Tiredness and Weakness	Can last 2-3 weeks	Mild, brief < 1 week
Stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common

The Common Cold

The common cold is a viral syndrome that causes over 90% of the nasal congestion, low grade fever, chills, sore throat and general aches and pains that people experience. Because it is caused by a virus, it is not affected by the use of antibiotics. A cold usually resolves in 7-10 days.

Influenza

The “flu” (influenza) is caused by a respiratory virus that usually occurs in the Northern Hemisphere between October and April. There are two types, A or B and the severity varies from year to year. Unlike the common cold, the “flu” begins suddenly with high fever, body aches and fatigue.

Treatment for the Common Cold

Rest, drinking lots of fluids, use over-the-counter medications if desired to treat symptoms.

Treatment for the Flu

It is important to take care of yourself and rest. Get plenty of fluids and take Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) for fever and body aches. Two new medications have been approved by the FDA to help shorten the course and lessen the severity of the flu if they are started within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms.

Over-the-Counter Medications

Choose the Right Medication for your Symptoms

Check the labels when using over the counter remedies because they are usually a combination of several different medications. They can have side effects like drowsiness or insomnia.

Some of the Medications can also interact with prescription medications you may be taking so it is **IMPORTANT TO READ THE LABELS FOR ANY WARNINGS.**

If you want to:	Choose Medication with:
Unclog a stuffy nose	Nasal decongestant
Quiet a Cough	Cough suppressant
Loosen mucus so that you can cough it up	Expectorant
Stop a runny nose and sneezing	Antihistamine
Ease fever, headaches, body aches	Pain reliever (analgesic)

Prevention

BE PREPARED!

Get the "Flu Shot." The Flu shot helps your body make antibodies to the Flu. Since new strains of the influenza virus develop each year, the vaccine must be updated and given yearly. Flu Shots are offered starting around the end of October through the season til March or April.

Guard against getting colds and flu by maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes good nutrition, adequate rest, decreased stress, limited or no smoking.

Limit the spread of infection by avoiding crowded places and wash your hands often. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.