

A Cold: What You Need to Know

A cold is an infection caused by a virus. The infection causes your upper respiratory system to become inflamed. Most colds go away without treatment.

Common symptoms of a cold include:

- Sneezing, dry throat, a stuffy nose, headache, watery eyes, and a cough.
- Your cough may be dry, or you may cough up mucus.
- You may have muscle aches, joint pain, and tiredness.
- Rarely, you may have a fever.

Symptom Relief

The following may help relieve cold symptoms, such as a dry throat and congestion:

- Gargle with mouthwash or warm salt water as directed.
- Suck on cough drops or hard candy.
- Use a cold or warm vaporizer or humidifier to ease your breathing.
- Rest for at least 2 days and then as needed to lessen tiredness and weakness.
- Use petroleum based jelly around your nostrils to lessen irritation from blowing your nose.

Drinking liquids will help thin and loosen thick mucus so you can cough it up. Liquids will also keep you hydrated. Ask your doctor what liquids are best for you and how much to drink each day.

Do not smoke: Smoking may worsen your symptoms and increase the length of time you feel sick. Talk with your doctor if you need help to stop smoking.

Preventing the Spread of Germs:

You can spread your cold germs to others for at least 3 days after your symptoms start.

- Wash your hands often.
- Do not share items, such as eating utensils.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze using the crook of your elbow instead of your hands.
- Throw used tissues in the garbage right away and wash your hands again.

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Return to the Emergency Department if:

- You are more tired and weak.
- You are not able to eat.
- Your heart is beating much faster than usual for you.
- You see white spots in the back of your throat and your neck is swollen and sore to the touch.
- You see pinpoint or larger reddish-purple dots on your skin.

Call your Doctor if:

- You have a fever higher than 102°.
- You have new or worsening shortness of breath.
- You have thick nose drainage for more than 2 days.
- Your symptoms do not improve or get worse within 5 days.
- You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

Follow up with your doctor as directed: Write down your questions so you remember to ask them during your visits.

Medicines

These medicines may be suggested by your doctor to lessen your cold symptoms. You can get these medicines without a doctor's order. Ask what medicines to take and when to take them. Follow directions.

- **NSAIDs or acetaminophen** help to bring down a fever or lessen pain.
- **Decongestants** help lessen stuffy nose.
- **Antihistamines** help lessen sneezing and a runny nose.
- **Cough suppressants** help lessen how much you cough.
- **Expectorants** help loosen mucus so you can cough it up.

Take your medicine as directed. Contact your doctor if you think your medicine is not helping or if you have side effects.

- Tell your doctor if you are allergic to any medicine.
- Keep a list of the medicines, vitamins, and herbs you take. Include the amounts, and when and why you take them.
- Bring the list or the pill bottles to follow-up visits. Carry your medicine list with you in case of an emergency.

Viral Illness: What You Need To Know

How to Prevent Spreading a Viral Illness

Wash your hands often with soap and water.

- After you use the bathroom, change a child's diapers, or sneeze.
- Before you prepare or eat food.
- If you do not have soap and water, use gel hand sanitizer with 60 percent alcohol.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have washed your hands first.

Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough.

- Cough into a tissue or the bend of your arm.
- If you use a tissue, throw it in the trash right away and wash your hands.

Clean shared items with a germ-killing cleaner.

- Clean table surfaces, doorknobs, and light switches.
- Do not share towels, silverware, and dishes with people who are sick.
- Wash bed sheets, towels, silverware, and dishes with soap and water.

If you have a mask, wear it over your mouth and nose if you are sick.

- A face mask may help protect others from getting infected with the flu.
- Wearing a mask is important when you are in common areas of your home or if you go to your doctor's office or hospital.

Stay away from others if you are sick.

- Stay at home until 24 hours after your fever and symptoms are gone.

Influenza vaccine helps prevent influenza (flu).

- Everyone older than 6 months needs to get a yearly influenza vaccine.
- Get the vaccine as soon as possible. You can often get it by September or October each year.

Is it a Cold or the Flu

| Signs and Symptoms | Cold | Flu |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| When Symptoms Start | Slowly | Fast |
| Fever | Rare | Often |
| Aches | A little | Often |
| Chills | Not Common | Very Common |
| Feeling Tired and Weak | Sometimes | Often |
| Sneezing | Common | Sometimes |
| Chest Pain and Cough | Mild to Moderate | Common |
| Stuffy nose | Common | Sometimes |
| Sore Throat | Common | Sometimes |
| Headache | Rare | Common |

How to Wash Your Hands

1 WET HANDS

2 APPLY SOAP

3 RUB HANDS PALM TO PALM

4 LATHER THE BACKS OF YOUR HANDS

5 SCRUB BETWEEN YOUR FINGERS

6 RUB THE BACKS OF FINGERS ON THE OPPOSING PALMS

7 CLEAN THUMBS

8 WASH FINGERNAILS AND FINGERTIPS

9 RINSE HANDS

10 DRY WITH A SINGLE USE TOWEL

11 USE THE TOWEL TO TURN OFF THE FAUCET

12 YOUR HANDS ARE CLEAN

How to Use Hand Sanitizer

APPLY THE PRODUCT ON THE PALM OF ONE HAND

RUB HANDS TOGETHER

COVER ALL SURFACES UNTIL HANDS FEEL DRY (20 SEC)