

Colds & Flu



Prevention and Self Care

What is a Cold?

Colds are minor infections of the nose and throat caused by several different viruses.

- A cold may last for about one week, but some colds last longer, especially in children, elderly people, and those in poor health.
- Adults get an average of two to four colds per year, mostly between September and May. Young children suffer from an average of six to eight colds per year.
- Colds are highly contagious. They are most often spread by hand-to-hand contact and by touching contaminated objects, or from droplets in the air via coughs or sneezes.

Cold Symptoms



- runny nose
- congestion
- sneezing
- weakened senses of taste & smell
- scratchy throat & cough

5 Steps to Preventing Colds



1. Wash your hands

Most cold viruses can last up to three hours on the skin or infected objects.

2. Don't cover your sneezes and coughs with your hands.

Germs and viruses cling to your bare hands. Use a tissue or handkerchief.

3. Don't touch your face.

Cold viruses enter your body through the eyes, nose, or mouth.

4. Steer clear of colds.

Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, especially during the first few days.

5. Practice healthy habits.



What is Influenza (Flu)?

The Flu is an infection of the respiratory system caused by the influenza virus. Most People recover from the flu within one or two weeks.



There are three types of influenza virus: **A**, **B**, **C**

- Types **A** and **B** are the most severe. The viruses change constantly and different strains circulate around the world every year.
- Type **C** causes either a very mild illness, or has no symptoms at all. It does not cause epidemics and does not have the severe public health impact that influenza types **A** and **B** do.

Flu Symptoms

- are more severe than those of colds
- come on abruptly
- temperature of 101° F or above
- include headache, body and muscle aches
- cough and sore throat
- chills, tiredness and achy all over



Severe complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infection, sinus infections, dehydration and worsening of chronic medical conditions like (Asthma or Diabetes).

Prevention: Flu Vaccines

The best tool for preventing the flu is the flu vaccine, and the best time to get a flu vaccine is early fall. December or even later can still be beneficial since most influenza activity occurs in January or later in most years. Though it varies, flu season can last as late as May.

1. Get your flu shot

Call your health care provider or visit a flu vaccine clinic.

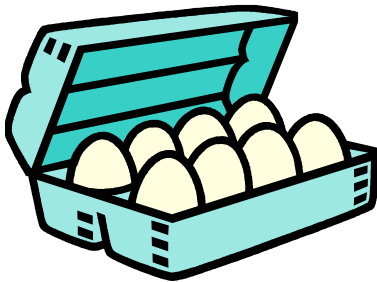


2. Know who should get a flu shot

In general anyone who wants to avoid the flu should consider getting the vaccine, but it is especially recommended for these groups.

- Adults 50 and over
- Children 6 months to 5 years
- People who smoke, have heart disease or have other chronic health condition
- Healthcare workers involved in direct patient care.

3. Who should not get a shot?



- Anyone who is allergic to eggs (the vaccine may contain egg protein)
- You have an acute illness and a fever. You should not get a flu shot until you are feeling better. Talk to your health care provider.

Myths and *Facts*

about the Colds & Flu

- **Myth:** You can catch the flu from a flu shot
Fact: The flu vaccine is made from an inactivated virus, so you cannot get flu from a flu shot.

- **Myth:** You can catch the flu or a cold from going outdoors in cold weather.

Fact: The flu and colds are more common in the winter months because that is when the viruses spread across the country.



- **Myth:** “Feed a cold and starve a fever(flu)”

Fact: This is definitely not a good idea in either case. You need more fluids than usual when you have the flu or a cold. Eat enough food to satisfy your appetite.



Self Care ♦ Symptom Relief



DRINK UP. Eight glasses of water and/or juice per day are recommended. Avoid alcoholic and caffeinated beverages since they are diuretic (increase urination) and can lead to dehydration.

GARGLE AWAY. For sore throat, gargle with warm salt water or drink warm lemon water with honey.

GET COLD RELIEF. When cold symptoms are slowing you down, consider nonprescription medications. Be sure to discuss all medications choices with your health care provider.



REST. A good nights sleep helps your immune system to recharge itself. If you don't get enough Zs, it doesn't have time to rev-up to help fight the virus.