

What Can a Cold or the Flu Lead To?

Colds or flu that worsen can lead to:

- **Ear infection.** This happens when bacteria or a virus infects and traps fluid behind the eardrum, causing pain and swelling or bulging of the eardrum.
- **Asthma.** A cold can trigger wheezing, even if you do not have asthma. If you do have asthma, a cold can make it worse.
- **Sinus Infection.** In adults or children, this occurs when there is swelling, pain, or infection of the lining of the sinuses.

Kids and the Flu

If your child has the flu, make sure they get plenty of rest and drink enough fluids.

Children younger than 5 years old and with certain chronic health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system) are at higher risk of serious complications from the flu. If your child is experiencing any of the following warning signs and symptoms, you should take them to the emergency room:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish lips or face
- Ribs pulling in with each breath
- Severe muscle pain (child refuses to walk)
- Dehydration
- Not alert or interacting when awake
- Seizures
- Fever above 104°F
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions

Q&A

Can my child go to school or day care if sick?

No, they should stay home and rest until their symptoms have improved to avoid spreading the virus to other children or caregivers.

When can my child go back to school or daycare after having flu? Keep them home from school or day care for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone and their symptoms have improved or gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Cold and Flu Prevention

There is no vaccine for the common cold, but you can take precautions to slow the spread by doing the following:



- Wash your hands.
- Disinfect your stuff.
- Sneeze and cough into tissues.
- Do not share drinking glasses or eating utensils.
- Avoid people with colds.
- Clean surfaces.

Flu Vaccination

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend annual flu vaccination for everyone age 6 months or older. Not only can the vaccine lower your risk of getting the flu, but it can also lower the risk of serious illness from the flu and needing to stay in the hospital.

References:

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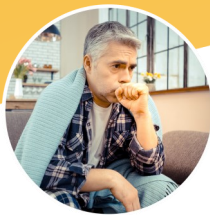
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This brochure is intended to promote healthy habits. It is not intended as a substitute for medical advice or professional care. Before making changes to your diet or exercise, consult your health care provider.



Risk Factors:



Age



Weak Immune System



Exposure

Cold vs. Flu

Colds and flu share many symptoms, so it can be difficult to tell the difference based on symptoms alone.

Influenza, referred to as the flu, and the common cold are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but are initiated by different viruses. The flu is caused by influenza viruses only, and the common cold can be caused by several different viruses. These viruses include rhinoviruses, parainfluenza, and seasonal coronaviruses.

The main difference between them is the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms are typically more severe and occur more suddenly. Colds are usually milder than the flu. Individuals who are experiencing colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Unlike the flu, colds generally do not cause serious complications, such as pneumonia, or lead to hospitalization.

IS IT A COLD OR FLU?

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU
Symptom onset	Gradual	Abrupt
Fever	Rare	Usual
Aches	Slight	Usual
Chills	Uncommon	Fairly common
Fatigue, weakness	Sometimes	Usual
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Mild to moderate	Common
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Headache	Rare	Common

#FIGHT FLU

The Common Cold

The common cold is a viral infection of your nose and throat. Though it may not feel like it at the time, it is usually harmless.

A healthy adult can expect to have two or three colds each year. Infants and small children may have colds more frequently. For most people, recovery from a common cold can take a week to 10 days.

Causes

Rhinoviruses are most frequently the cause of the common cold. The cold virus can spread through droplets in the air when someone who is sick coughs, sneezes, or talks around a healthy person. The virus enters the body through your mouth, eyes, or nose.

It also spreads by hand-to-hand contact with individuals who have a cold or by sharing infected objects, like eating utensils, towels, toys, or telephones. If you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth after such contact, you will most likely catch a cold.

Risk factors

The following factors can increase your chances of getting a cold:

- **Age.** Infants and young children are at greatest risk for colds, especially if they spend time in a childcare setting.
- **Weak immune system.** Having a chronic illness or weakened immune system increases your risk.
- **Time of the year.** You are more likely to get colds in the fall and winter but can get one at any time.
- **Smoking.** Your likelihood of catching a cold and having more severe colds increases if you smoke or are around secondhand smoke.
- **Exposure.** Being in crowds, such as at school or on an airplane, you are likely to be exposed to viruses that cause colds.

The Flu (Influenza)

The flu is an infection of the respiratory system, which includes the nose, throat, and lungs. Most people with the flu get better on their own, but sometimes, the flu and complications related to it can be deadly.

Causes

The flu travels through the air in droplets when an individual with the infection coughs, sneezes, or talks to a healthy person. You can inhale the droplets directly or by touching an infected area you can transfer them to your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Individuals with the virus are contagious from about a day before symptoms appear until about four days after they start. Children and those with weakened immune systems may be contagious for a little longer.

Risk factors

The following factors can increase your chances of getting the flu:

- **Age.** Young children under age 2 and adults older than age 65.
- **Location.** Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.
- **Pregnancy.** People who are pregnant or plan to be pregnant during flu season.
- **Weak immune system.** Having a chronic illness or weakened immune system.
- **Race.** American Indians or Alaska Natives.
- **Pre-existing Conditions.** People who have chronic illnesses, such as asthma, heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, and diabetes.
- **Weight.** People with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher.

