

How can I tell if I have a cold or the flu?

A cold and the flu cause many of the same symptoms. But a cold is generally mild, while the flu tends to be more severe.

A cold often starts with feeling tired, sneezing, coughing and having a runny nose. You may not have a fever or you may run a low fever--just 1 or 2 degrees higher than usual. You may also have muscle aches, a scratchy or sore throat, watery eyes and a headache.

The flu starts suddenly and hits hard. You'll probably feel weak and tired, and have a fever, dry cough, a runny nose, chills, muscle aches, severe headache, eye pain and a sore throat. It usually takes longer to get over the flu than a cold

What causes colds and the flu?

Viruses. Over 100 different viruses can cause colds. There aren't as many viruses that cause the flu. That's why there's a shot for the flu and not for colds.

What can I do to feel better?

There's no cure for a cold or the flu. Antibiotics don't work against viruses. All you can do to feel better is treat your symptoms while your body fights off the virus

Ways to treat your cold/flu symptoms:

- Stay home and rest, especially while you have a fever.
- Stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke, which can make cold symptoms worse.
- Drink plenty of fluids like water, fruit juices and clear soups. Fluids help loosen mucus. Fluids are also important if you have a fever because fever can dry up your body's fluids, which can lead to dehydration.
- Gargle with warm salt water a few times a day to relieve a sore throat. Throat sprays or lozenges may also help relieve the pain.
- Use saline (salt water) nose drops to help loosen mucus and moisten the tender skin in your nose.

Should I take medicine for a cold or the flu?

No medicine can cure a cold or the flu. Medicine can, however, help relieve some of your cold or flu symptoms. Check with your doctor before giving any medicine to children

What about prescription medicines for the flu?

Some prescription medicines can relieve flu symptoms. These medicines may help reduce the severity of symptoms if they are started soon after you begin to get sick.

These medicines come as pills or as an inhaler. The inhaled type may cause problems for some people with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Should I call my doctor?

In most cases, you don't need to see your doctor when you have a cold or the flu. However, if you have any of the symptoms call your doctor.

What's in over-the-counter cold/flu medicines?

The ingredients listed below are found in many cold/flu medicines. Read labels carefully. If you have questions, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

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- **Flu** is a viral disease so there is no role for antibiotics use except if the patient develops other complications.
- **Analgesics** relieve aches and pains and reduce fever. Examples: acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, ketoprofen, naproxen. Warning: Children and teenagers shouldn't be given aspirin.
- **Antitussives** tell your brain to stop coughing. Don't take an antitussive if you're coughing up mucus. Example: dextromethorphan.
- **Expectorants** help thin mucus so it can be coughed up more easily. Example: guaifenesin.
- **Oral decongestant** shrinks the nasal passages and reduces congestion. Examples: ephedrine, pseudoephedrine

Emergency Cold/Flu Symptoms:

In children:

- High (above 38.9 °C) or prolonged fever
- A cold that lasts for more than 10 days
- Trouble breathing, fast breathing or wheezing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Earache or drainage from the ear
- Changes in mental state (such as not waking up, irritability or seizures)
- Flu-like symptoms that improve, but return with a fever and a worse cough
- Worsening of chronic medical condition (such as diabetes or heart disease)

In adults:

- High (above 38.9 °C) or prolonged fever
- A cold that lasts for more than 10 days
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Fainting or feeling you are about to faint
- Confusion or disorientation
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Severe pain in your face or forehead

Hoarseness, sore throat or a cough that won't go away.



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The Flu and Cold

