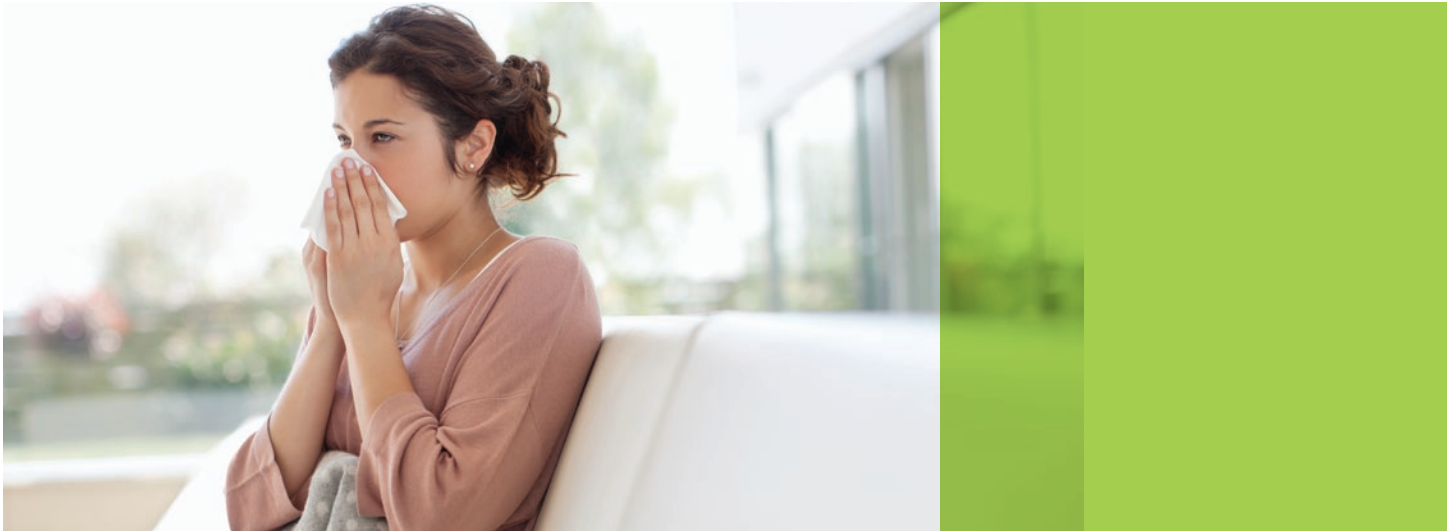


Do you know the difference between Cold and Flu?



Did you know?

Flu and common cold are both respiratory illnesses caused by viruses. However, despite that their symptoms may sometimes feel similar, **they are very different diseases**. The difference is important because it can affect what you can do to **prevent** the disease, and what you should be aware of **if you are infected**.

Here are the differences:

- There is a vaccination for the flu, but not for the common cold.
- The flu usually has more intense symptoms than a cold, with potentially serious complications.
- The symptoms of a cold can develop gradually, while flu symptoms usually hit fast and are severe.

Symptom	Colds	Flu
Fever	Rare	High (37° – 39° C), can last 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Intense
General Aches, Pains	Mild	Very common, often severe
Fatigue, Weakness	Mild	Intense, can last up to 2-3 weeks
Extreme Exhaustion	Never	Very common, starts early
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Very common	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Common
Cough	Mild to moderate	Common; can become severe



When to Seek Medical Attention?

Most colds and flus **do not require medical attention** and just need to run their course. **Bed rest and plenty of liquids along with supportive pain relief remedies** are the most workable treatment plans. A lot of over-the-counter medications are available to relieve symptoms. Like any other illness, **if symptoms persist or worsen**, it is best to go see your health care provider to determine what's making you sick and what you can do to feel better. Call your doctor if you have a persistent cough, persistent fever higher than 38.8° C and chills, difficulty in breathing, shortness of breath, or chest pain when you cough - or if you hack up yellow-green or bloody phlegm.

Self-Care Tips

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Drink as much water and juice as possible - preferably two quarts per day (people on fluid restricted diets need to seek medical advice) - Fluids are important to counter the dehydration that causes much of the discomfort associated with fever, and for removing stuffiness from the body. Fluids may also help soothe a sore throat. **Alcohol and caffeine tend to dehydrate, so try to avoid it.**
- **Refrain from smoking.** Smoking makes it difficult for your body to eliminate mucous from the lungs and may predispose you to bronchitis or pneumonia. This would be a good **time to consider quitting!**
- **To relieve a sore throat,** drink plenty of fluids. Gargle with warm water (you can add salt) to help reduce any inflammation. Keep your throat moist by using a vaporizer or sucking on lozenges or ice cubes made from fruit juice.
- **For congestion,** try sleeping on your back with your head raised on two or three pillows. You may find additional relief with oral and/or nasal decongestants.
- **For sore nose and chapped lips,** apply emollient lotion.

BONUS: Are You Being a Smart Health Consumer?

Today's tip: Should I take antibiotics for a cold or flu?

No! Antibiotics are only useful in fighting **bacteria**, and both the cold and flu are infections from **viruses**. Sometimes, colds can lead to a bacterial infection in your lungs, sinuses, or ears. If that happens, your health care provider may prescribe antibiotics, but only at the time that a bacterial infection is suspected. Taking antibiotics when you have a virus tend to do more harm than good. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed **increases your risk of getting an infection later** that may resist antibiotic treatment.

In short, there is no cure for a cold or the flu. Both run their natural course. Best treatments are medications or remedies are to **relieve the symptoms** of the infection to make you feel better: Prescription antiviral drugs may shorten your illness by 1 to 2 days; over-the-counter products can also lessen some symptoms like a cough and congestion. **Be smart about when to use antibiotics.**

Sources:

- University Health Service, University of Michigan - <https://uhs.umich.edu/coldsfu>
- Is It a Cold or Is It the Flu? <http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/flu-guide/flu-treatment-antibiotics-or-not#1>
- American Lung Association: <http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/influenza/>

This information is intended to provide general guidance on health and wellness matters and is not medical advice. MetLife is not responsible for the accuracy of this information, which may not apply to your particular circumstances, so you rely on it at your own risk. You should always consult a licensed health care professional for the diagnosis and treatment of any medical condition and before starting or changing your health regimen, including seeking advice regarding what drugs, diet, exercise routines, physical activities or procedures are appropriate for your particular condition and circumstances.

Knowing what to do — and not to do — about the flu

The following are common misconceptions about the flu, prepared by Harvard Health Publications.¹

If you've ever had the flu, you know how sick you can be. Chances are good that some of the advice friends and family gave you about the flu was incorrect. Take a look at the top 10 common flu myths and be sure to arm yourself with correct information next flu season!

Myth #1: you can catch the flu from the vaccine.

The vaccine is made from an inactivated virus that can't transmit infection.² People who get sick after receiving a flu vaccination might get sick anyway. It takes a week or two for the protective benefits from the vaccine to kick-in. However, some people assume that because they got sick after getting the vaccine, the shot caused their illness. Yet, research has shown that this is not possible.²

Myth #2: Healthy people don't need to be vaccinated.

The flu vaccination may be routinely recommended for people who have a chronic illness. However, anyone — even healthy folks — may benefit from being vaccinated. World Health Organization's (WHO) current guidelines suggest that children ages 6 months to 19 years old, pregnant women, and anyone over age 49 should consider being vaccinated each year.³ In addition, the WHO recommends the flu shot for healthy people who might spread the virus to others who are particularly susceptible. For this reason, health care workers are routinely advised to get the flu vaccination in order to better protect their own patients.

Myth #3: Getting the flu vaccination is all you need to do to protect yourself from the flu.

There are additional steps you can take to protect yourself during flu season besides vaccination. Avoid contact with people who have the flu, wash your hands frequently. If soap and water is not available readily, consider an alcohol based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth after contact with persons or surfaces you think may be exposed to the virus. Germs spread this way.

Myth #4: The flu is just a bad cold.

Influenza may cause bad cold-like symptoms, such as a sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, hoarseness and a cough. In 2016, WHO estimated that globally up to 5 million people were hospitalized each year because of a severe illness and up to 500,000 cases resulted in death.³

Myth #5: You can't spread the flu if you're feeling well.

Actually, 20% to 30% of people carrying the influenza virus have no symptoms.²

Myth #6: You don't need to get a flu shot every year.

The influenza virus changes (mutates) frequently. Therefore getting vaccinated each year is recommended by WHO to ensure immunity to the most current strains most likely to cause an outbreak.³

Myth #7: You can catch the flu from going out in cold weather without a coat, with wet hair or by sitting near a draughty window.

The only way to catch the flu is by being exposed to the influenza virus. Flu season coincides with the cold weather, so people often associate the flu with cold, draughty environments. They happen at the same time, but it is not a cause and effect relationship.

Myth #8: Feed a cold, starve a fever.

If you have the flu (or a cold) and a fever, you need more fluids. Consult your healthcare provider to see if you might benefit from increasing or decreasing how much you eat. Though you may have no appetite, "starving" yourself will accomplish little. In addition, poor nutrition will not help you get better.

Myth #9: Chicken soup will speed your recovery from the flu.

Hot liquids can soothe a sore throat and provide much needed fluids. However, chicken soup has no other specific qualities that can help fight the flu.

Myth #10: If you have a high fever with the flu that lasts more than a day or two, antibiotics may be necessary.

Antibiotics work well against bacteria, but they aren't effective for a viral infection like the flu. Then again, some people develop a bacterial infection as a complication of the flu, so it may be a good idea to be checked out by your doctor if your symptoms drag on or worsen.

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