

Cold & Flu



What causes a cold or the flu?

Viruses cause the common cold and the flu. There are over 100 types of viruses that cause colds; and influenza viruses, causing the “flu,” change from year to year. They are both upper respiratory infections and cause similar symptoms. Antibiotics won’t work for these viruses. In some cases anti-viral medications may be used for the flu.

What’s the difference between a common cold and the flu?

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU
Fever	Rare	Characteristic, high, lasts 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General Aches, Pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, Weakness	Quite mild	Can last up to 2-3 weeks
Extreme Exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort, Cough	Mild to moderate; hacking cough	Common; can become severe
COMPLICATIONS	Sinus congestion or earache	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can be life-threatening
PREVENTION	Good hygiene	Good hygiene; flu vaccine
TREATMENT	Only temporary relief of symptoms	Antiviral drugs (oseltamivir or zanamavir) within 24-48 hours of onset in select populations

Chart from WebMD 2009, modified



How long will the cold or flu last?

Typically, a cold can last 7-10 days with the first 3-4 being the most miserable on average. Flu can last up to 2-3 weeks.

If I can't make the symptoms go away in my child, does that mean that there's nothing I can do for him or her?

No, there's a lot you can do to help relieve your child's suffering during the illness.

Recommendations include:

- 1.) Humidifier or vaporizer in your child's room
 - Doesn't matter which kind, as long as it's moisture
 - Vaporizer has cool water and is safer
 - No additives to water if infant or toddler
- 2.) Nasal saline and bulb syringe
- 3.) Encourage age appropriate fluids
 - warm teas with lemon and honey are soothing
 - fluids help thin secretions
- 4.) Elevate head of bed
- 5.) Fever control
 - Medications: ibuprofen and/or acetaminophen
 - cooling measures like lukewarm (room temperature) baths, light clothing
- 6.) Rest
- 7.) Honey for cough ONLY IF child is older than one year old
- 8.) Cough drop lollipops

What if my child began to get better but then worsened again (e.g. began having fevers again or worsening cough or congestion)?

Your child may have developed a secondary bacterial infection. A virus-infested body is a perfect incubator and home for bacteria. They love moisture and warmth, which a body with the cold or flu has. A visit to your doctor can help determine whether or not this has occurred.

What if the cough lasts for more than 10-14 days?

You should bring your child in to see your doctor if the cough has persisted beyond this time period. It could mean that he or she has reactive airway disease or asthma and should be evaluated.

Go to the ED now if:

- Newborn-12 weeks old with a fever > 100.4
- Not alert when awake (true lethargy)
- Fever and weak immune system
- Difficulty breathing not relieved by cleaning out the nose
- Fever >105

Call today and make a same day appointment

- Earache with fever
- Age < 2 years old and ear infection is suspected
- Cloudy discharge from ear canal
- Sinus pain (not just congestion) with fever present >24 hours (Age: usually 6 years or older)
- Sore throat with fever is main symptom and present >48 hours
- Fever returns after going away > 24 hours and symptoms worse or not improved
- Fever present > 3 days

See today or tomorrow in office

- Earache without fever
- Sinus pain (not just congestion) without fever present > 48 hours after using nasal washes and pain medicine (Age: usually 6 years or older)
- Sore throat without fever is the main symptom and present > 48 hours
- Parent wants child seen

See within 3 days in office

- Blocked nose interferes with sleep after using nasal washes several times
- Yellow scabs around the nasal openings
- Nasal discharge present > 14 days