

Colds and Flu:

Prevention

The best way to fight colds and flu is to not get them in the first place! Here are some tips for protecting yourself and preventing the spread of the viruses that cause colds and flu.

- **Get vaccinated!** The flu vaccine is a shot or nasal spray that protects your body from getting the flu virus. It's the best flu protection there is. See your health care provider or ask your parent(s) or guardian(s) about getting the flu vaccine.
- **Avoid sick people.** Though this may be hard, avoiding people who are sick with cold or flu may prevent you from getting infected.
- **Don't share.** Avoid sharing food, utensils, glasses, water bottles, lip balm, and other things that could pass viruses.
- **Wash your hands.** Wash your hands with warm water and soap for 15 seconds before you eat and after you cough or sneeze to stop the spread of viruses. Don't rub your eyes and nose if you haven't just washed your hands.
- **Sneeze/cough the right way.** Sneezing or coughing into your bare hands can spread cold and flu-causing viruses. Sneeze or cough into a tissue or the inside of your elbow to prevent the spread of infection.

YOU can help your body fight off infection by boosting your immune system.

Here's how:

- Get plenty of sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a good, balanced diet with lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Lower your stress
- Stop smoking and avoid people who smoke

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

It can be hard to tell if you have a cold or the flu. Both are caused by viruses; however the viruses are not the same. The symptoms for cold and flu are similar, but there are some important differences.

1. Colds - usually milder symptoms that take time to appear
2. Flu - more symptoms especially fever, body aches, fatigue, and dry cough that happen suddenly

Read the table below to see a list of symptoms for colds and flu. You'll notice that they share some symptoms, such as a stuffy nose. The biggest difference is that colds are usually mild and last a few days; flu symptoms are generally worse and last longer.

You may only have a few of these symptoms, or you may have more.

Symptom	Cold	Flu
No or low fever (98-100°F)	X	
Sneezing	X	
Watery eyes	X	
Runny nose	X	
Stuffy nose	X	X
Headache	X Rare or Mild	X Moderate - Severe
Body aches	X Mild	X Moderate - Severe
Cough	X	X
Sore throat	X	X
Fatigue (Tired)	X	X
High fever (102°F and up)		X
Nausea or vomiting		X Sometimes
Diarrhea (loose BM's)		X Sometimes
Loss of appetite (not hungry)		X
Chills		X
General weakness		X

How long does a cold or flu last?

A cold usually lasts for 2 to 14 days after your symptoms start. The flu usually lasts from a few days to a week or two. It's important to remember that you can spread the flu to another person from 1 day before you have symptoms to up to 5-7 days *after you get sick*.

When should you call your primary care provider? **If you have any of the problems below:**

- Having cold symptoms for 10 or more days
- Fever more than 103°F
- Your symptoms are getting worse (especially if you have a fever of >101°F)
- Any fever for 3 or more days
- Coughing up phlegm that is yellow or green
- Stomach pain
- Chest pain or pressure
- Vomiting (throwing up) especially if you can't keep anything down
- Ear pain or fluid draining from your ears
- Dizziness that comes on suddenly
- You have diabetes, asthma, or another medical condition that gets worse

Should I stay home from school if I have a cold or the flu?

Most health care providers agree that anyone who has a fever and/or symptoms that could be contagious such as a productive cough, diarrhea, vomiting or fatigue, should stay home. It's important to get enough rest and stay hydrated (you'll need to drink plenty of fluids) when you have a cold or flu. Staying home from school also stops the virus that causes colds and flu from spreading.

When can I go back to school after the cold or flu?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that anyone with cough and fever stay home from school for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever, and are not taking fever reducing medicine.

Here are some tips for helping your body fight off colds and flu:

- Drink lots of fluids, especially water (at least 8 glasses/day)
- Get plenty of rest
- Don't smoke and avoid people who smoke
- Don't drink alcohol

Reference: Boston Children's Hospital

http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/cold_and_flu_prevention.html#ixzz2H1A6rbvZ