



Cold vs. Flu: Know the Difference

Influenza, also called “the flu”, and the common cold, are both respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses with different symptoms. Use this chart to learn the difference between them. The term “stomach flu” is used to describe an illness with symptoms of diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting, but the “stomach flu” is not the same thing as influenza.

Symptoms	Common Cold	Flu
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appearance of Symptoms• Fever• Chills• Headache• Muscle Aches and Pains• Feeling Tired and Weak• Cough• Stuffy Nose• Sneezing• Sore Throat• Chest Discomfort	<p>Symptoms appear gradually</p> <p>Uncommon</p> <p>Uncommon</p> <p>Uncommon</p> <p>Uncommon or mild</p> <p>Sometimes—usually mild</p> <p>Common—mild to moderate hacking</p> <p>Common</p> <p>Common</p> <p>Common</p> <p>Sometimes—can be mild to moderate</p>	<p>Symptoms appear suddenly—can appear within 3—6 hours</p> <p>Common—100 to 102°F or higher, lasting 3—4 days</p> <p>Common</p> <p>Common—can come on suddenly and be severe</p> <p>Common—can be severe</p> <p>Common—can be moderate to severe; can last for 2—3 weeks; extreme tiredness can occur suddenly</p> <p>Common—can become severe and last for several weeks</p> <p>Sometimes</p> <p>Sometimes</p> <p>Sometimes</p> <p>Common—can be severe</p>
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Antihistamines• Decongestant• Pain reliever/fever reducer• Rest and plenty of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Antiviral medicines</u>—see a doctor as soon as possible• Antihistamines• Decongestant• Pain reliever/fever reducer• Rest and plenty of water
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use good hand hygiene• Avoid close contact with anyone who has a cold• Cover your cough and sneezes• Clean all surfaces touched by you and others often• Stay home when sick	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Annual vaccination</u>• Use good hand hygiene• Avoid close contact with anyone who has the flu• Cover your cough and sneezes• Clean all surfaces touched by you and others often• Stay home when sick• In certain situations, your doctor may prescribe antiviral medications to prevent you from getting the flu
Complications/ Severity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sinus congestion• Middle ear infection• Asthma• Usually does not cause severe health problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bronchitis• Pneumonia—can be life threatening• Sinus and ear infections• Sepsis• Secondary bacterial infections• Hospitalization can occur