

Relieving the symptoms

Since both infections (cold and flu) are caused by viruses, antibiotics do not work and are therefore not recommended. There are, however, treatments that can help relieve the symptoms, and these can be purchased over the counter at the pharmacy. No treatment will speed up your recovery from a virus. Also, it is important that you talk to your pharmacist before buying cold or flu medicine, to make sure you choose the right one for you.

| Symptoms | Treatment | Effectiveness/Tolerance |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Fever | Pain relievers: • Acetaminophen • Ibuprofen | Relieve pain and fever. Ibuprofen also reduces inflammation, but can cause digestive discomfort. |
| Wet cough | Expectorants (syrup): • Guaifenesin • Ivy leaf | Effectiveness is unproven. Getting rid of a wet cough is not a must – it actually helps expel the mucus. |
| Dry cough | Cough suppressants: • Dextromethorphan | Effectiveness is unproven. Some may interact with prescribed medication. |
| Sinus congestion | Saline solution (nasal spray, drops, nasal rinse) Oral decongestants: • Pseudoephedrine • Phenylephrine Nasal decongestants (nasal sprays): • Oxymetazoline • Xylometazoline | We recommend the regular use of a saline solution to clear your sinuses. If the congestion persists, try a decongestant. Stop using a nasal decongestant after 5 days, otherwise you might risk a rebound congestion. Decongestants are contraindicated if suffering from certain illnesses or taking certain medication. They also act as a stimulant, which can impair your sleep. |
| Runny nose | Antihistamines: • Diphenhydramine • Cetirizine, etc. | Antihistamines can prove useful to relieve a runny nose. Some antihistamines can cause drowsiness. |

Pharmacies sell combined cold medicine formulations containing many of the above ingredients. These often contain acetaminophen, so **be sure to read the product labels carefully**. Combining more than one product may be hazardous, as it can trigger an acetaminophen overdose.

Oseltamivir is an antiviral sometimes prescribed for people at high risk of flu-related complications. In most cases, it is not required.

To summarize, most of the treatments available can help alleviate cold or flu symptoms. Rest is also recommended, as are drinking plenty of fluids and giving your body time to fight the infection.

When to see a doctor

As mentioned earlier, some people are at higher risk of cold- and flu-related complications. They need to be monitored closely and be seen by a doctor if the situation warrants it.

A doctor should be seen when the person has:

- + symptoms lasting longer than a week;
- + high fever;
- + yellow or green mucus;
- + difficulty breathing, chest or back pain, is in an overall weakened state.

Do not hesitate to make an appointment with your pharmacist to learn more, or visit brunet.ca.

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Flu and Cold



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Flu or cold?



A flu and a cold are respiratory infections. Because they share similar symptoms, they are sometimes confused. A cold is more prevalent and less serious than a flu, also referred to as influenza.

There are 100+ types of viruses capable of transmitting a cold, while the influenza virus is the main cause of a flu. On average, adults can catch two to four colds a year, and children, six to eight.



Symptoms

| | Cold | Flu |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Fever | Rare If it occurs, it is very mild | High (38-40°C) Sudden onset Lasts 3-4 days |
| Muscle aches and pains | Minor | Frequent Often severe |
| Headache | Rare More frequent if nose is congested | Frequent Pain in the forehead area Intensity depends on fever |
| Feeling tired/weak | Mild | Severe Can last up to a month |
| Bedridden | Rarely | At onset |
| Runny nose | Frequent | Occasional |
| Nasal congestion | Frequent | Occasional |
| Sneezing | Frequent | Occasional |
| Sore throat | Frequent, often at first Normally goes away within 3 days | Occasional |
| Coughing | Mild to moderate | Frequent Moderate to serious |
| Duration | 7 to 14 days | 7 to 14 days |

Prevention

- + Wash your hands to prevent contamination, and use an antiseptic gel when soap and water are unavailable;
- + Exercise and eat a balanced diet;
- + Get enough sleep;
- + Do not smoke: tobacco irritates the respiratory tract, thus increasing the risk of infection;
- + Find different ways to manage stress (yoga, relaxation, etc.).

The best flu prevention method is the annual flu shot. It is safe since you cannot get the flu from the flu shot.

People who are at higher risk of flu-related complications should be vaccinated:

- + Children 6 months to 17 years old with a chronic illness;
- + Pregnant women in their 2nd or 3rd trimester;
- + Adults with a chronic illness;
- + People age 75 or older;
- + Parents and relatives of babies 0 to 6 months old;
- + Healthcare workers.

These are the most effective prevention measures during cold and flu season. As for the various flu busters available on the market, they have not proven to be effective to either prevent or treat respiratory infections.