

Flu or Cold Symptoms?

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Think like a
doctor.

What are common cold symptoms?

Cold symptoms usually begin with a sore throat, which usually goes away after a day or two. Nasal symptoms, runny nose, and congestion follow, along with a cough by the fourth and fifth days. Fever is uncommon in adults, but a slight fever is possible. Children are more likely to have a fever with a cold.

With cold symptoms, your nose teems with watery nasal secretions for the first few days. Later, these become thicker and darker. Dark mucus is natural and does not usually mean you have developed a bacterial infection, such as a sinus infection.

Several hundred different viruses may cause your cold symptoms.

How long do cold symptoms last?

Cold symptoms usually last for about a week. During the first three days that you have cold symptoms, you are contagious. This means you can pass the cold to others, so stay home and get some much-needed rest.

If cold symptoms do not seem to be improving after a week, you may have a bacterial infection, which means you may need antibiotics.

Sometimes you may mistake cold symptoms for allergic rhinitis (hay fever) or a sinus infection. If your cold symptoms begin quickly and are improving after a week, then it is usually a cold, not allergy. If your cold symptoms do not seem to be getting better after a week, check with your doctor to see if you have developed an allergy or sinusitis.

What are common flu symptoms?

Whether a person has typical seasonal flu or swine flu, the symptoms seem to be quite similar. Flu symptoms are usually more severe than cold symptoms and come on quickly. Symptoms of swine flu and seasonal flu include sore throat, fever, headache, muscle aches and soreness, congestion, and cough. Swine flu in particular is also associated with vomiting and diarrhea.

Most flu symptoms gradually improve over two to five days, but it's not uncommon to feel run down for a week or more. A common complication of the flu is pneumonia, particularly in the young, elderly, or people with lung or heart problems. If you notice shortness of breath, you should let your doctor know. Another common sign of pneumonia is fever that comes back after having been gone for a day or two.

Just like cold viruses, flu viruses enter your body through the mucous membranes of your nose, eyes, or mouth. Every time you touch your hand to one of these areas, you could be infecting yourself with a virus, which makes it very important to keep your hands germ-free with frequent washing to prevent both flu and cold symptoms.

Cold Symptoms

- ✓ Nasal Symptoms
- ✓ Runny Nose
- ✓ Congestion
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Slight Fever possible but not common in adults

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Flu Symptoms

- ✓ Sore Throat
- ✓ Fever
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Muscle Aches
- ✓ Soreness
- ✓ Congestion
- ✓ Cough

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Both cold and flu viruses enter the body through the mucous membranes of the eyes, mouth and nose.

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Swine Flu Symptoms

- ✓ [Flu Symptoms](#)
- ✓ Vomiting
- ✓ Diarrhea

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