



# Is it a cold or the flu?

You're experiencing symptoms such as aches, a sore throat, fever and headache. You think it's a cold or possibly the flu but not sure which. It's important to know the difference between cold and flu symptoms.

## The Common Cold

Typical cold symptoms usually come on gradually and can nasal congestion with sneezing, post-nasal drip, cough and sore throat. A fever is unusual in adults but more common in children and run its course in seven to ten days.

Colds are most contagious during the first two to three days and symptoms could last up to one week. Since colds are viral infections, antibiotics are not an effective form of treatment. Certain over-the-counter (OTC) medications including antihistamines, decongestants, acetaminophen and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen can relieve congestion, aches and other symptoms. It's also very important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

## Seasonal Flu

Flu symptoms, although similar to those of a cold, are typically more severe and come on like gangbusters, out of the blue. Flu can develop into a more serious condition such as pneumonia. Symptoms can include a moderate to high fever, dry cough, sore throat, intense muscle and body aches, headache, fatigue as well as a stuffy and runny nose. The flu can last for a week or even two and leave you exhausted for another week or so.

In order to know for sure if you have the flu, a rapid flu test, must be done by your physician as soon as you start to get sick. Getting plenty of fluids and rest are essential and some OTC medications such as decongestants and pain relievers may control your symptoms. If prescribed within the first 48 hours, antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu, Relenza or Rapivab may be helpful and shorten the course of the illness.

**Still unsure? Use this quick reference guide:**

## Cold vs. the Flu?

Cold	Symptom	Flu
Not usually	Body ache	Almost always
Almost always	Congestion, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing	Sometimes
Sometimes	Exhaustion	Almost always
Not usually	Fever	Almost always
Sometimes	Headache	Usually

It's always recommended to contact your physician when you first have symptoms or if your symptoms worsen.