

Is it the cold or flu?



Colds are very common and can be caused by one of 200 viruses. There is no vaccine for colds.



'The flu' is caused by the influenza virus, and can be severe. A vaccine is available for the flu.

Understand the symptoms

Symptom	Colds	Flu
Fever	Rare	Common
Cough	Common	Common
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Fatigue	Sometimes	Common
Body aches/pain	No	Common
Headache	Rare	Common
Stuffy/runny nose	Common	Sometimes
Diarrhoea	No	Sometimes (in children)
Sneezing	Common	No
Vomiting	Rare	Common in children / Rare in adults

Colds and flu treatments



Lots of rest



Avoid cigarette smoke



Plenty of water



Keep warm



Eat a healthy diet



Throat lozenges for a sore throat



Paracetamol or ibuprofen for fever, aches and pains



Saline nasal sprays or decongestants for a blocked or runny nose



Do not use cough medicines for children younger than 6 years old

Practise good hygiene



It's important to keep up good hygiene when you're sick, to avoid spreading colds and flu to other people. Remember to wash your hands regularly with soap and water, and sneeze or cough into your elbow or a tissue.

Colds and flu myths debunked

Myth: The flu is not a serious illness

Fact: The flu is highly contagious and can be life-threatening

Myth: Vitamin C supplements can prevent colds and flu

Fact: There is no evidence to support vitamin C supplements preventing colds or flu

Myth: You can catch colds and flu from cold weather or getting caught in the rain

Fact: Colds and flu are caused by viruses, not by wet climates or being exposed to cold air

Myth: Colds and flu can be treated with antibiotics

Fact: Antibiotics only work against bacteria, not viruses

Myth: Healthy people don't need to be vaccinated

Fact: Everyone over the age of 6 months should be vaccinated every year

Myth: Having the flu vaccine during pregnancy will harm the baby

Fact: The flu shot is safe for pregnant women at all stages of pregnancy

Groups at risk of severe flu



Elderly



Pregnant women



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



People with existing medical conditions

Flu vaccination



Getting vaccinated every year is your best protection against the flu



The flu vaccine is FREE under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) Schedule for people at high risk



Speak to your doctor or a pharmacist for more information



Concerned about symptoms?

Use healthdirect's Symptom Checker to get advice on what to do next

healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker

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