

Is It the Flu? You Can Treat *and* Prevent.



Is It a Cold or the Flu?

Every year, up to 60 million people in the United States come down with the flu. Besides the distress of the illness, daily life can be disrupted. Knowing the difference between a cold and the flu, as well as how to prevent and treat it, can help keep your family healthy this flu season.

Colds and flu are both caused by viruses and are highly contagious. With the flu, the symptoms in adults and children come on like a freight train and are much more severe, causing fever spikes, body aches, fatigue and chills.

The chart below can help you to know the difference between a cold and the flu.

Symptoms at a Glance

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS	FLU	COLD
ONSET	SUDDEN	GRADUAL
FEVER*	COMMON; LASTING 3-4 DAYS	RARE
COUGH	DRY, CAN BECOME SEVERE	HACKING; MILD
HEADACHE	PROMINENT	RARE
MUSCLE/JOINT ACHE, PAIN	USUAL; OFTEN SEVERE	SLIGHT
FATIGUE AND WEAKNESS	CAN LAST UP TO 2 WEEKS	VERY MILD
EXTREME EXHAUSTION	EARLY AND PROMINENT	NEVER
CHEST DISCOMFORT	COMMON	MILD/MODERATE
STUFFY NOSE	SOMETIMES	COMMON
SNEEZING	SOMETIMES	USUALLY
SORE THROAT	SOMETIMES	COMMON

* For many people aged ≥65 years or who have chronic illnesses, the risk and severity of influenza infection is magnified; however, flu-induced fever in these individuals may be minimal or even absent.

Know Your Flu Facts

The flu enters the body through the nose, mouth or eyes. The virus is spread when someone with the flu coughs or sneezes. Symptoms usually appear within 1 to 4 days of contact. A person with the flu is contagious one day before he or she feels sick, and can continue to pass the flu to others 3 to 7 days after symptoms appear.