

# IS IT A COLD OR THE FLU?

*Every year, thousands of Americans become sick with a cold or the flu. Learning about these diseases can help you prevent and treat them effectively.*



The common cold is caused by over 200 different viruses. A cold will develop gradually, and is most commonly spread through hand-to-hand contact with someone who has a cold, or by touching a hard surface or object that a person with a cold has recently touched. Though coughing and sneezing can spread airborne particles, transmission is unlikely until there has been prolonged contact with someone who has a cold.

Influenza ("the flu") is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by viruses. It most often hits abruptly, and can be spread by sneezes, coughs and hand contact. Healthy children and adults usually recover from the flu in 7 to 10 days. People who get the flu and who aren't healthy or have a weakened immune system can develop potentially fatal complications -- the most serious being pneumonia, bronchitis and secondary bacterial infections.

## SYMPTOM

## COLD

## FLU

✓ FEVER	Rare	Very Common - Lasts 3-4 Days; High (102-104F)
✓ HEADACHE	Rare	Prominent
✓ GENERAL ACHES & PAINS	Slight	Usual & Often Severe
✓ FATIGUE & WEAKNESS	Mild & Brief	Can last 2-3 weeks
✓ EXTREME EXHAUSTION	Never	Early & Prominent
✓ STUFFY NOSE	Common	Sometimes
✓ SNEEZING	Usual	Sometimes
✓ SORE THROAT	Common	Sometimes
✓ CHEST DISCOMFORT and COUGH	Mild to Moderate Hacking Cough	Common - Can Become Severe

## Treating the Symptoms ...

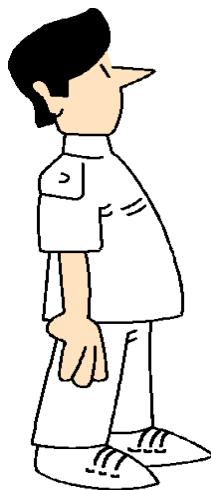
- ❖ Stay home and get plenty of rest.
- ❖ Use a pain reliever - aspirin, *Advil* (ibuprofen), *Tylenol* (acetaminophen), *Orudis K* or *Actron* (ketoprofen), or *Alieve* (naproxen sodium) - for fever, headache and muscle aches. NEVER GIVE ASPIRIN TO CHILDREN.
- ❖ Drink lots of liquids. Non-caffeinated beverages (water, diluted juices or herb tea) help to thin secretions, keep membranes moist and resistant to infections and keep the body hydrated, especially when there is a fever.
- ❖ Use over-the-counter medications that most closely match your symptoms. If you are taking any prescription drugs, such as high blood pressure, asthma, depression or anxiety medications, check with your doctor or pharmacist before self-medicating to avoid an accidental drug interaction.
- ❖ To reduce a fever, try bathing or sponging with tepid - not hot or cold - water. Never use ice water or rubbing alcohol.
- ❖ New prescription antiviral drugs are available to treat the flu. If taken within the first 24 to 48 hours of the illness onset, they can reduce the duration of uncomplicated flu.
- ❖ Don't ask your doctor for antibiotics for a cold or flu. **ANTIBIOTICS CANNOT TREAT A VIRUS**, and should not be prescribed unless you develop a secondary bacterial infection.



### PREVENTION IS THE KEY

- ✓ Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Don't touch your nose, eyes or mouth as germs can enter your body easily by these paths.
- ✓ Disinfect surfaces that are touched by others (someone with a cold or the flu is contagious before they have any symptoms) - telephones, computer keyboards, handrails & doorknobs.
- ✓ GET A FLU SHOT! Flu viruses are constantly mutating, so you need a flu shot every year.

Colds and flu rarely have complications that require a doctor's care. **CALL THE DOCTOR IF...**



- ❖ your symptoms don't improve in 7 to 10 days
- ❖ you develop breathing problems or a respiratory infection
- ❖ you cough hard for more than 10 days or cough up thick rusty or green mucus
- ❖ you have a high fever for 3 days
- ❖ you have a severe earache or any ear drainage
- ❖ a sore throat becomes severe and a fever accompanies it , or you have trouble swallowing
- ❖ a child develops rapid or difficult breathing, starts wheezing or acts unusually irritable or lethargic