Cold vs. Flu:
Know the Difference

Influenza, also called “the flu”, and the common cold, are both respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses with different symptoms. Use this chart to learn the difference between them. The term “stomach flu” is used to describe an illness with symptoms of diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting, but the “stomach flu” is not the same thing as influenza.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Common Cold</th>
<th>Flu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of Symptoms</td>
<td>Symptoms appear gradually</td>
<td>Symptoms appear suddenly—can appear within 3—6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
<td>Common—100 to 102°F or higher, lasting 3—4 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chills</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
<td>Common—can come on suddenly and be severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle Aches and Pains</td>
<td>Uncommon or mild</td>
<td>Common—can be severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Tired and Weak</td>
<td>Sometimes—usually mild</td>
<td>Common—can be moderate to severe; can last for 2—3 weeks; extreme tiredness can occur suddenly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Common—mild to moderate hacking</td>
<td>Common—can become severe and last for several weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuffy Nose</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneezing</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore Throat</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest Discomfort</td>
<td>Sometimes—can be mild to moderate</td>
<td>Common—can be severe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Treatment**

- Antihistamines
- Decongestant
- Pain reliever/fever reducer
- Rest and plenty of water

- Antiviral medicines—see a doctor as soon as possible
- Antihistamines
- Decongestant
- Pain reliever/fever reducer
- Rest and plenty of water

**Prevention**

- Use good hand hygiene
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has a cold
- Cover your cough and sneezes
- Clean all surfaces touched by you and others often
- Stay home when sick

- Annual vaccination
- Use good hand hygiene
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has the flu
- Cover your cough and sneezes
- Clean all surfaces touched by you and others often
- Stay home when sick
- In certain situations, your doctor may prescribe antiviral medications to prevent you from getting the flu

**Complications/Severity**

- Sinus congestion
- Middle ear infection
- Asthma
- Usually does not cause severe health problems

- Bronchitis
- Pneumonia—can be life threatening
- Sinus and ear infections
- Sepsis
- Secondary bacterial infections
- Hospitalization can occur

For more information call or visit us on the web:
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