



What to do for Colds & Flu

5 tips to prevent colds and flu

1. Wash your hands many times a day:
 - Before and after meals
 - After using the bathroom
 - After using shared telephones, keyboards, and other office machines
 - After shaking hands with someone (Use hot water and soap. **Any** soap will work. It doesn't have to be "antibacterial." Scrub briskly for as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday.")
2. Between washings, use a hand sanitizer that has alcohol.
3. Try not to touch your hands to your eyes, nose, or mouth.
4. Boost your immune system; exercise, get enough sleep, eat healthy, and don't smoke
5. Get a flu shot.

Take cold drugs safely: *Read the label!*

- Don't give cough or cold medicines to children under 6 years old unless the doctor tells you to.
- Make sure your cold medicine is OK to take with your other health problems. Make sure it doesn't cause problems with your other medicines.
- Always follow what the label says to get the right dose. Taking extra medicine does **not** help, and it can be very dangerous.
- Be extra careful not to take more than one drug with acetaminophen at the same time. For example, if you take Tylenol® for pain, **don't** use a cough syrup that has acetaminophen. Taking too much acetaminophen can hurt your liver.
- Some drugs treat many symptoms at the same time. Choose a drug that treats **only** the symptoms you have.
- Check for side effects, like drowsiness. Have somebody else drive if you are taking something that makes you sleepy.

About flu shots

- The best time to get a flu shot is October or November. But it's OK to get one as late as January.
- Flu shots are extra important for people over 50, pregnant women, children 6 months to 4 years old, and people with chronic illnesses like asthma or diabetes.
- Talk to your doctor about getting a flu shot if you are allergic to eggs. If you have a severe egg allergy, you may need a referral to a specialist.
- Yes, you need a flu shot every year. The viruses change every year, so the vaccine is made new every year.

Home Care for Colds & Flu

Your doctor can't do much for a cold or the flu. Both are caused by viruses, and few drugs work against them. Meanwhile, follow these tips to feel better.

Aches and fever

A fever is normal. It's your body's way of fighting the virus. But fever and pain can make it hard for you to rest. Try one of these drugs to help with pain and fever:

- **Ibuprofen** (eye-byoo-PROH-fin). Advil® and Motrin® are brands of ibuprofen.
- **Acetaminophen** (uh-see-tuh-MIN-uh-fin). Tylenol® is a brand of acetaminophen.

Runny nose

- **Put a hot, damp cloth** to your face for 5–10 minutes. Follow it with a dry towel. This will help ease the pressure in your sinuses.
- **Try a decongestant** (dee-kun-JES-tint) pill to bring down swelling in your sinuses. Sudafed® is one brand. Be sure to read the label warnings or check with your doctor. Decongestants are not safe for some people.
- **Nasal sprays like Afrin®** can help. But **don't** use them for more than 3 days in a row. If you do, you can get more swelling, bleeding, or a raw nose or throat. Switch to a pill after 3 days if your nose is still running.
- **Try antihistamines** (an-tuh-HIS-tuh-meenz) like Benadryl®. They dry up mucus.

Note: *Drugstores usually have their own brand or a generic brand of most cold drugs. The store brands and generics are often cheaper than name brands. And they work the same.*

Sore throat

- Suck on hard candy
- Gargle with warm salt water

Stuffy nose

- Mom was right about chicken soup. Clear soups and other liquids can help break up stuffiness.
- Drink water, juice, and herbal teas. Stay away from caffeine and alcohol. (For example, **don't** drink coffee or “hot toddies.”)
- Breathe in steam to help clear a stuffed or drippy nose. Humidifiers are good, but steam is better. Take a hot shower. Or lean over a steaming pan of water with a towel over your head and shoulders.
- Try a salt water (saline) nasal spray.

Act fast to stop the flu

Doctors now have antiviral drugs for some kinds of flu. But you need to take these drugs right away — within 2 days (48 hours) of getting sick.

Call your doctor if you:

- Start getting flu symptoms or
- Are exposed to the flu before getting a flu shot

Your doctor will decide if you should take antiviral drugs.

Call your doctor if...

- You have a very bad sore throat, especially if there are white patches at the back of your throat.
- You have a fever over 102 that lasts more than 3 days.
- You have a headache and cough, you feel very tired, and your muscles and joints ache.
- You cough up something pink or reddish, and you have fever, shortness of breath, or chest pain.
- You are near someone with the flu before you get your flu shot.

Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room if...

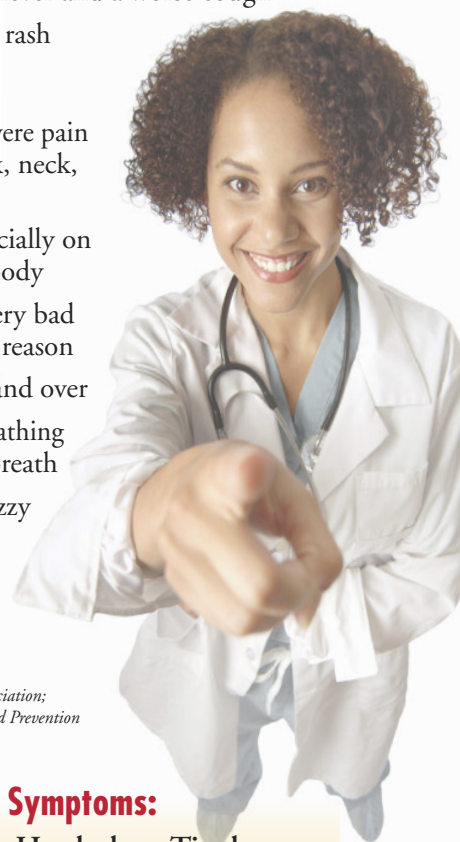
Your Child

- Is breathing fast or has trouble breathing
- Has blue lips or nails
- Is not drinking enough
- Does not wake up or answer you
- Is so fussy that they don't want to be held
- Has flu symptoms that get better, but then come back with fever and a worse cough
- Has fever with a rash

You

- Have sudden, severe pain in the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Feel numb, especially on one side of the body
- Get a sudden, very bad headache for no reason
- Throw up over and over
- Have trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Suddenly feel dizzy or confused
- Have pain or pressure in the chest or stomach

Sources: American Heart Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Flu Symptoms:

- High Fever • Headache • Tiredness
- Dry Cough • Sore Throat
- Runny or Stuffy Nose • Muscle Aches