

Is It a Cold or the Flu?

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Usual; high (100°F to 102°F, occasionally higher, especially in young children); lasts 3 to 4 days
Headache	Rare	Common
General Aches, Pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, Weakness	Sometimes	Usual; can last up to 2 to 3 weeks
Exhaustion	Never	Usual; at the beginning of the illness
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort, Cough	Mild to moderate; hacking cough	Common; can become severe
Treatment	Antihistamines Decongestants Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines	Antiviral medicines— see your doctor
Prevention	Wash your hands often with soap and water; avoid close contact with anyone with a cold	Annual vaccination; antiviral medicines—see your doctor
Complications	Sinus congestion Middle ear infection Asthma	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can worsen chronic conditions; can be life-threatening. Complications more likely in the elderly, those with chronic conditions, young children, and pregnant women

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

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