

## Is it the Flu or a Cold?

Flu symptoms often are confused with the common cold. Both illnesses cause sinus congestion, fatigue, sore throat, fever, chills, headaches and coughing. But the two viruses are considerably different.

### The Common Cold

Symptoms of the common cold usually begin 2 to 3 days after infection and often include:

- Mucus buildup in your nose
- Difficulty breathing through your nose
- Swelling of your sinuses
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Headache

Fever is usually slight but can climb to 102 degrees Fahrenheit in infants and young children. Cold symptoms can last from 2 to 14 days, but like most people, you'll probably recover in a week. If symptoms occur often or last much longer than 2 weeks, you might have an allergy rather than a cold.

Colds occasionally can lead to bacterial infections of your middle ear or sinuses,

requiring treatment with antibiotics. High fever, significantly swollen glands, severe sinus pain, and a cough that produces mucus, may indicate a complication or more serious illness requiring a visit to your healthcare provider.

### The Flu

If you get infected by the flu virus, you will usually feel symptoms 1 to 4 days later. You can spread the flu to others before your symptoms start and for another 3 to 4 days after your symptoms appear. The symptoms start very quickly and may include:

- Body aches
- Chills
- Dry Cough
- Fever
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- Stuffy Nose

Typically, the fever begins to decline on the second or third day of the illness. The flu almost never causes symptoms in the stomach and intestines. The illness that some call "stomach flu" is not influenza.

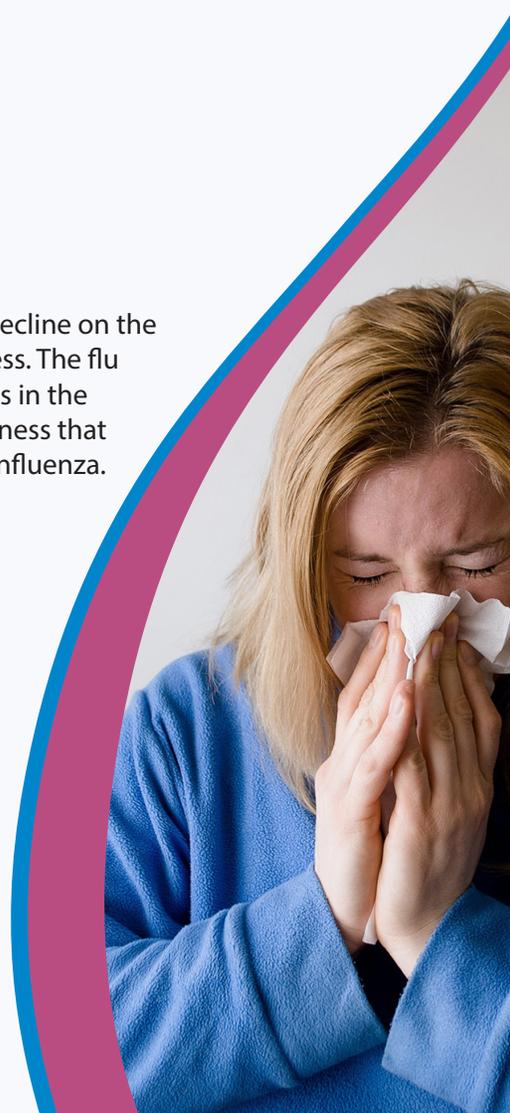
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## Is it the Flu or a Cold?

**There are several ways you can keep yourself from getting a cold or the flu, or passing it on to others:**

- Because cold and flu germs on your hands can easily enter through your eyes and nose, keep your hands away from those areas of your body.
- If possible, avoid being close to people who have a cold or the flu. If needed stay home from work or school.
- If you have a cold or the flu, avoid being close to people.
- Cover your nose or mouth if you sneeze or cough.

### Hand Washing

Hand washing with soap and water is the simplest and one of the most effective ways to keep from getting colds or giving them to others. During cold season, you should wash your hands often and teach your children to do the same. When water isn't available, CDC recommends using alcohol-based products made for washing hands.

### Disinfecting

Rhinoviruses can live up to 3 hours on your skin. They also can survive up to 3 hours on objects such as telephones and stair railings. Cleaning environmental surfaces with a virus-killing disinfectant might help prevent spread of infection.

### Vaccine

Because so many different viruses can cause the common cold, the outlook for developing a vaccine that will prevent transmission of all of them is dim. Scientists, however, continue to search for a solution to this problem.



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