

Is this You? Cold or Flu?



University Health Services 574-631-7497

St. Liam Hall

Open 24hours/day during academic year

Common Symptoms of the Common Cold

- * Nasal congestion
- * Colored nasal drainage
- * Full or "popping" ears
- * Scratchy or sore throat
- * General body aches
- * Cough
- * Fatigue
- * Teary or watery eyes

No antibiotic can cure this infection

Expect to be sick for 10-14 days

You can help yourself get better

The Common Cold

Uncommonly Miserable

"Telling me I have a 'common cold' makes me feel like you're saying 'I'm not really sick. I feel sick!'"

We hear this often. Let us reassure you, you are sick. You have an upper respiratory infection, or common cold. Even though it is "common", it is still miserable for those infected. We know that.

Unfortunately, a cold is caused by a virus. That means there is no medicine to fix it. Fortunately, there are a number of measures you can take to help you feel better as your body mounts its defense against the virus.

Rest You feel better and heal faster when your body is rested.

Drink Fluids Make sure you stay well hydrated so that your body has what it needs to help you recover. Hydration also helps control sore throat pain and thins mucous so that you are able to expel it.

Pain Relievers Take over-the-counter pain relievers like acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) on a regular basis (not only one time) to help with ongoing headaches, sore throats, and body aches.

Decongest Take a decongestant product with pseudoephedrine in it. According to federal law, you have to sign for it at a pharmacy (at UHS or any other). Any product labeled "PE" such as "Sudafed PE" is available for purchase without a signature. However, it does not contain pseudoephedrine. Sudafed and Mucinex D (or generic equivalents) are good choices.

Nasal Irrigation Hot showers, saline sprays or "nettle pots" are helpful methods for clearing the sinuses.

A Doctor Can't Really Help You

"What?"

That's right. Not for the first 10-14 days anyway. A doctor can't do anything to help you that you aren't able to do for yourself, as described above.

However, there are times when it is necessary to seek medical care for your symptoms.

These symptoms are:

- * Severe facial or sinus pain
- * Painful swelling of the neck glands
- * Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath
- * Fever greater than 100.4°F for more than 2 days
- * Difficulty swallowing even water
- * Painful cough

In addition to these, please seek care if you have concerns or questions about your current illness.

FYI Dark or colored nasal mucous is natural and does not necessarily mean you have a bacterial infection



Decongestants

Fluids

Rest

Pain Relievers





Over-the-counter products can help you feel better. Try some that fit your symptoms. If they help, keep using them.

No "quick fix" exists for a cold or flu. Rest and symptomatic care are your best options.

If you have tried this and still have concerns about your illness, please seek help from a medical provider.



Is it the Flu?

The "flu" or influenza is a respiratory illness. It is most common between November and April.

Common symptoms of "the Flu" include a sudden onset of a fever (>101 F), chills, muscle aches, headache, fatigue, and dry cough. Many people also have a sore throat and runny nose.

An important indicator of your illness is the relatively sudden onset of symptoms of influenza, over a few hours.

Conversely, cold symptoms tend to appear more gradually, over several hours or days,

Just like the common cold, influenza is caused by a virus, of which there are many strains. The "flu shot" is made based on last year's most prevalent strains. That is why you need to get the immunization updated every year.

Since there are many strains of influenza, you can still get influenza even if you get your "flu shot".

Since the cause is viral, there is no antibiotic to rid your body of the virus.

There are anti-viral medications that are useful in limited cases, and are prescribed at the discretion of a physician.

Cold vs. Flu

Symptoms

- Fever
- Headache
- General aches, Pains
- Fatigue, Weakness
- Extreme Exhaustion
- Stuffy Nose
- Sneezing
- Sore Throat
- Chest discomfort, Cough

Cold

- Sometimes, usually mild
- Occasionally
- Slight
- Sometimes
- Never
- Common
- Usual
- Common
- Mild to moderate; hacking cough

Flu

- Usual; high (>101); lasts 3-4 days
Common
- Usual; often severe
- Usual; can last 2-3 weeks
- Usual; at the beginning of illness
Sometimes
- Sometimes
- Sometimes
- Common; can become severe

How to Feel Better

If it's a virus, you know by now that an antibiotic can't help. Here are some ideas to help you manage your symptoms and feel better. This list is not all-inclusive. These are basic tools you will use for many illnesses.

Fever, Aches, Sore Throat
Try **acetaminophen** (Tylenol), **ibuprofen** (Advil) or **naproxen** (Aleve)

Follow the package instructions for dosing for all over-the-counter products.

Congestion Try a product with **pseudoephedrine** (Sudafed, Mucinex D)

Cough A product with **dextromethorphan** (Delsym, Mucinex DM)