



A Note from the School Nurse

Is it a Cold or the Flu?

The flu (influenza) and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses but they are caused by different viruses. Some of the symptoms of a cold and flue are similar, but unlike a cold the fatigue and cough caused by the flu can last more than 2 weeks—long after other symptoms subside. Typically, colds begin slowly, two to three days after infection with the virus.

The first symptoms are usually a scratchy, sore throat, followed by sneezing and a runny nose. Temperature is usually normal or only slightly elevated. A mild cough can develop several days later. Symptoms tend to be worse in infants and young children who sometimes run a temperature up to 102°F. Cold symptoms usually last from 2 days to a week.

Signs of the flu include sudden onset with a headache, dry cough, and chills. The symptoms quickly become more severe than those of a cold. The flu sufferer often experiences a “knocked-off-your-feet” feeling, with muscle aches in the back and legs. Fever of up to 104°F is common. The fever usually begins to decrease on the second or third day, then respiratory symptoms like nasal congestion and sore throat appear. Fatigue and weakness may continue for days or even weeks.

The flu rarely causes stomach upset. What is sometimes called “the stomach flu” is actually gastroenteritis, (an irritation of the digestive tract).

Cold and flu symptoms can sometimes imitate more serious illnesses like strep throat, measles, and chicken pox. Allergies, too, can resemble colds with their runny noses, sneezing, and general miserable feeling. If symptoms become severe, or persist always consult your physician.

How Do I Avoid the Flu?

Most colds and flu’s strike in the fall and winter, not due to the cold weather, but due to the amount of time spent indoors around other people. Viruses spread in respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing and some flu viruses can live for up to 3 hours on surfaces and things like door knobs. Some ways to prevent the spread of cold and flu are:

- ♥ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze—throw the tissue away after you use it.
- ♥ Wash your hands often with soap and water. If you are not near water, use an alcohol based hand cleaner.
- ♥ Stay away as much as you can from people who are sick.
- ♥ If you have the flu or a cold, stay home to prevent spreading it to others.
- ♥ Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. These are the main entry routes for germs.
- ♥ Get plenty of rest and eat a variety of healthy foods.

What to do if you get sick

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare in adults and older children, but can be as high as 102°F in infants and small children	Usually 102°F, but can go up to 104°F and usually lasts 3-4 days
Headache	rare	Sudden onset and can be severe
Muscle aches	mild	Usually and often severe
Tiredness and weakness	mild	Can last two or more weeks
Extreme exhaustion	never	Sudden onset and can be severe
Runny nose	often	sometimes
Sneezing	often	sometimes
Sore throat	often	sometimes
Cough	Mild hacking cough	Usually, and can become severe

There is no cure for a cold or the flu, but there are some things you can do to help yourself feel better. For example, there are many over the counter medications available to help relieve symptoms. Some of these include:

- ♥ Decongestants to relieve nasal congestion
- ♥ Antihistamines to control sneezing and nasal drip.
- ♥ Cough suppressants to quiet a cough
- ♥ Expectorants to break up mucus in the chest, this makes it easier to cough up.
- ♥ Analgesics which work to relieve pain and lower fever.

Always remember to read the labels carefully to make sure the medication will treat the symptoms you or your child have. Consult your physician or healthcare provider for the best course or treatment. Never give a child adult strength medication or medication not labeled for children.

Get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids.

Nurse Julie and Nurse Kerrie