

# Colds & Flu

What You Need To Know



## Permafold® Topics Common Cold

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## Flu

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# Common Cold

The common cold is an upper respiratory infection. It is very contagious. On average, adults get about 2 to 4 colds a year. Children get about 8 colds a year.

## Prevention

- Wash your hands often. Each time, take 15 to 20 seconds using soap and warm, running water.
- When you can't wash your hands, use an alcohol-based wipe or gel to sanitize your hands. Rub the gel into your hands until your hands are dry.
- Try to avoid contact with people and their things when they have a cold.
- Keep your fingers out of your nose, mouth, or eyes.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue. Throw the tissue away after using it. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Keep your distance from others if you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces. Examples are door handles, railings, phones, light switches, and remote controls. Use a product that kills viruses.
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer in your bedroom in winter.
- Stay healthy:
  - Eat nutritious foods.
  - Do regular exercise.
  - Manage stress.
  - Get enough sleep.
- Follow your doctor's or health care provider's advice about taking vitamins, minerals, and/or herbal products that claim to prevent colds.



## Signs & Symptoms

Cold symptoms mostly affect you above the neck.

- Stuffy nose. Mucus builds up. This may make it hard to breathe through your nose.
- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Cough
- Scratchy, sore throat
- Mild fever, if any
- Headache
- Mild aches and pains



Cold symptoms usually appear 2 or 3 days after you pick up a cold virus. A cold usually lasts 3 to 7 days. In older persons though, a cold can last longer. Most people recover in a week. The cough that comes with a cold can last a few weeks after other symptoms go away. If you get cold symptoms often or they last much longer than 2 weeks, you might have an allergy, not a cold.

## Causes & Risk Factors

Colds are caused by more than 200 viruses. Ways you can pick up a cold virus:

- You touch a person's hands that have cold germs, such as through a handshake.
- You touch an object or surface that has cold germs on it and then touch your nose, mouth, or eyes. Common examples are door handles, railings, light switches, phones, and remote controls.
- You breathe air droplets that have cold germs from coughs and sneezes.

You can not get a cold if you sit or sleep in a draft, go outside when your hair is wet, or do not wear a jacket in cold temperatures.

## Treatment

Self-care usually treats a cold. Antibiotics **do not** treat cold viruses. Persons with some health conditions, such as asthma, should contact their doctors for advice to manage symptoms.

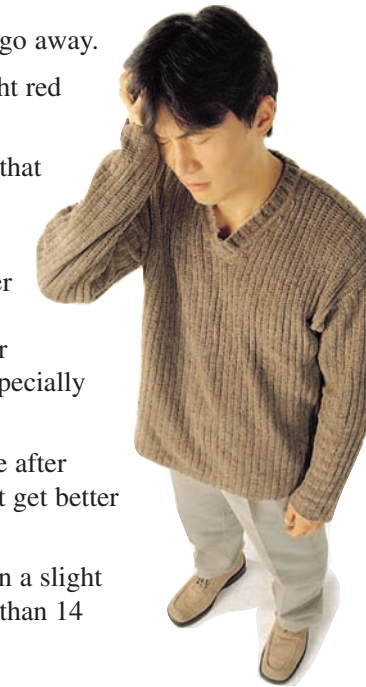
## Self-Care

- Drink lots of liquids.
- Take an over-the-counter (OTC) pain reliever, if needed. ***Do not give aspirin to anyone under 19 years old. Aspirin and other medicines with salicylates have been linked to Reye's Syndrome.***
- For nasal congestion, use salt water drops, such as Ocean brand or a saline nasal spray.
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer to add moisture to the air.
- Have chicken soup to clear mucus.
- Gargle every few hours with warm salt water. (Mix ¼ teaspoon of salt with 1 cup of warm water.)
- Suck on a piece of hard candy or medicated lozenge. **Note:** Do not give these to children under 5 years old.
- If you use OTC medicines for cold and cough symptom relief, be careful. Read the warnings on the label. Ask your doctor or pharmacist which products are safe for you to use. **Note:** Do not give OTC cold and cough medicines to children under 6 years old, unless advised by their doctors.
- To soothe a sore throat, have warm drinks, such as tea with lemon and/or honey. **Note:** Do not give honey to a child under 1 year old due to the risk of botulism.
- Check with your doctor or health care provider about using zinc lozenges, echinacea, and/or vitamin C when cold symptoms start.



## Reasons to Contact Doctor

- You wheeze or have trouble breathing.
- A baby less than 3 months old has a fever between 99.5 °F and up to 100.4°F.
- A person age 3 to 65 years old has a fever over 104°F. A person age 65 years and older has a fever of 102°F or higher.
- A child between 3 months and 3 years old has a fever of 102.2°F or higher.
- A bad smell comes from the throat, nose or ears.
- An earache persists.
- A headache doesn't go away.
- A sore throat is bright red or has white spots.
- A cough has mucus that is yellow, green, or gray.
- Pain or swelling over the sinuses worsens with bending over or moving the head, especially with a fever.
- Symptoms get worse after 4 to 5 days or do not get better after 7 days.
- Symptoms other than a slight cough last for more than 14 days.



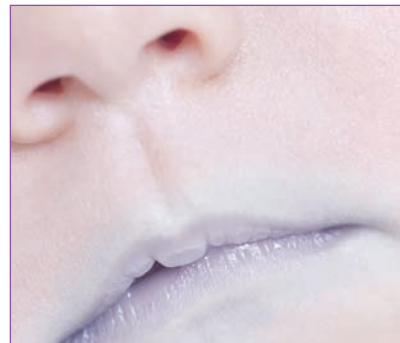
## Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is an infection of the lungs and breathing passages. In adults and children over 3 years old, symptoms are like those of a cold. In children under 3 years old, however, RSV can cause a lower respiratory infection, such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia. Infants 2 to 6 months old are more prone to these conditions.



## Reasons to Get Medical Care Fast

- Breathing is very fast (over 40 breaths per minute).
- Extreme shortness of breath occurs.
- Grunting sounds are heard with breathing.
- The skin, lips, or fingernails have a bluish color.
- Wheezing, a severe cough and/or lethargy occurs.
- A baby less than 3 months old has a fever of 100.4°F or higher. A child 3 months to 3 years old has a fever of 104°F or higher.



Reviewed and Approved by the Senior Medical Advisory Board



# Flu

Flu is short for influenza. This illness affects your respiratory tract (your nose, throat, breathing tube, and lungs.)



There are many kinds of flu. These include:

- **Seasonal flu.** This is the common flu that comes every year during fall and winter months. Each year, different strains of type A and/or type B viruses cause this kind of flu.
- **H1N1 flu.** This is caused by novel H1N1 virus. It was first detected in people in Mexico and the U.S. in April of 2009. At first, it was called swine flu, because it seemed like the viruses found in North American pigs (swine). But it also has elements of bird and human flu viruses.
- **Pandemic flu.** This is a term for *any* type of flu that causes a global outbreak of serious illness that spreads easily from person-to-person. H1N1 flu was declared a pandemic in June of 2009.
- **Bird (avian) flu.** This is caused by avian influenza A (H5N1) virus which normally infects wild birds. Contact with infected birds or surfaces they contaminate can spread this virus to humans. The viruses may be able to change to a form that could spread from person-to-person and result in a widespread infection in humans. Get information for this from: [www.cdc.gov/flu/avian](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian).

## Prevention

- The single best way to protect against getting the flu is getting vaccines† for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu (as available). **Note:** Persons with a severe allergy to eggs should not get flu shots. {†Get up-to-date advice for vaccines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 800.CDC.INFO (232.4636) or [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).}
- Follow your doctor’s advice for vaccines, antiviral medicines, and other ways to help protect you from the flu.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough and sneeze. Throw the tissue away after you use it. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve.



- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Take at least 20 seconds each time. When you can’t wash your hands, use alcohol-based wipes or gels to clean your hands. Rub the hand gel into your hands until they are dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with people and their things when they have the flu or flu symptoms.
- Keep your distance from others if you are sick.
- When possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick, and don’t send your children to childcare or school if they are sick.
- Clean and disinfect commonly used objects and surfaces. Examples are door handles, phones, railings, light switches, and remote controls.
- Stay healthy. Eat nutritious foods. Do regular exercise. Manage stress. Get enough sleep.

You *cannot* get H1N1 flu from eating pork or pork products.

## Signs & Symptoms

Flu symptoms come on suddenly. Symptoms for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu are:

- Fever (can be a high fever)
- Cough
- Chills
- Body aches. Fatigue.
- Headache
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea and vomiting may occur, especially with H1N1 flu.



## Complications from the flu can include:

- Bacterial pneumonia
- Severe respiratory problems
- Ear or sinus infections
- Dehydration
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions

## Causes & Risk Factors

Seasonal flu and H1N1 flu viruses are spread through:

- Breathing air droplets that contain the viruses from an infected person’s coughs and sneezes.
- Touching an object or surface that has flu viruses on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Some viruses and bacteria can live from 20 minutes up to 2 hours or more on surfaces like door handles, and desks.

People infected with H1N1 flu may be able to infect others for up to 7 days following the start of symptoms or until they have been symptom free for 24 hours. Children and people with weakened immune systems could be contagious for more than 7 days.

**Note:** Complications from seasonal flu are more common in persons younger than 5 years old and older than age 65. So far, H1N1 flu has caused greater problems in people under the age of 25.

## These Conditions Increase the Risk for Complications from the Flu

- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease.
- Pregnancy
- Weakened immune system from illness or medicines that lower the immune response
- Cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or other conditions of the nervous system, especially in children



## Treatment

- Get up-to-date information on treating different kinds of flu from 800.CDC.INFO (232.4636), [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), and your doctor.
- Stay home from school and work for as long as advised by your doctor and the CDC (see previous bullet for contact information).
- Call your doctor. Describe symptoms. Ask if flu testing, an antiviral medicine, or medical care is needed. Prescribed antiviral medicines help make flu symptoms milder and help you recover sooner, if started within 48 hours (36 hours for children) of the start of flu symptoms. **Note:** Some antiviral medicines cause mental status changes in older persons and may be worse than flu symptoms.
- People with a chronic illness should consult their doctors for advice to manage symptoms.
- Antibiotics treat bacterial infections, if present, but do not treat flu viruses.
- Limit contact with others.

## Self-Care

- Inform the school or workplace if your child or you are sick.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- If needed, take OTC medicines to reduce fever and pain and to relieve cough and congestion. Take these as directed. **Note:** Do not give aspirin to anyone under 19 years old. Aspirin and other medicines with salicylates have been linked to Reye’s syndrome. Do not give OTC medicines for colds, coughs, and flu to children under 6 years old, unless advised by their doctors.
- Avoid contact with others so you don’t spread the flu.
- Wash your hands often, especially after blowing your nose and coughing.



## Good Times to Wash Your Hands

- After you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose
- Before you touch your face
- After using the bathroom
- After shaking hands
- After you touch door handles, phones, and other objects and surfaces that others touch or cough or sneeze on
- Before you eat and/or prepare food
- When you come into contact with someone who is sick

## Reasons to Contact Doctor

- Onset of flu symptoms, especially if you are at risk for serious problems from the flu
- Sinus pain, ear pain, or drainage from the ear
- A high or prolonged fever occurs. (See “Reasons to Contact Doctor” for Common Cold on panel 5.)
- Yellow or green sputum or nasal discharge that lasts more than 5 days or symptoms last longer than a week and self-care brings no relief.

## Reasons to Get Medical Care Fast

- Bluish or gray skin or lip color
- Shortness of breath
- Fast or troubled breathing
- Not waking up or not responding
- Coughing up true, red blood
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Sudden dizziness. Confusion.
- Red or purple rash that does not fade when pressure is applied to the skin
- Stiff neck; seizure; lethargy; severe headache that persists
- A baby less than 3 months old has a fever of 100.4°F or higher. A child 3 months to 3 years old has a fever of 104°F or higher.
- Being so irritable that a child does not want to be held
- Flu symptoms improve, but return with a fever and a worse cough

## For More Information, Contact:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
800.CDC.INFO (232.4636)  
[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) and [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)