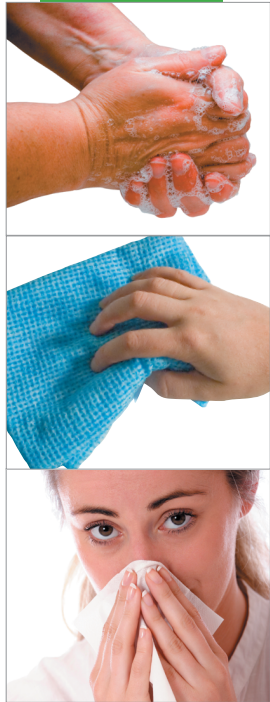


# COLDS & FLU

**WASH, WIPE, COVER...**  
**don't infect another!**

## Questions & Answers



### What is the difference between a cold and the flu?

Colds are fairly common, and can be caused by any one of many cold viruses. Flu is caused by just 2 or 3 different strains of one virus each year and usually causes a more severe illness. The symptoms of flu come on suddenly with a high fever and affect your whole body – not just your head and chest like a cold.

Cold Symptoms	Flu Symptoms
Low or no fever	High fever
Mild headache	Headache - can be severe
Sneezing	Sometimes sneezing
Mild cough	Dry cough, often becoming severe
Slight aches and pains	Body aches and pains
Mild fatigue	Extreme fatigue
Sore throat	Sometimes a sore throat
Duration of 7-10 days	Duration of 10-14days (cough can last longer)

### How are colds and flu spread?

The viruses that cause colds and flu are spread in 2 main ways:

By breathing in the fine droplets that are expelled from the nose and mouth of someone who is sick when sneezing or coughing.

By touching your mouth, nose or eyes with fingers that picked up the virus from a surface or object touched by someone who is sick.

### What can I do to prevent getting sick?

Avoiding exposure to sick people will reduce the risk to you. If co-workers, family or friends are sick, encourage them to take the simple steps outlined below (see 'How can I stop the spread of colds and flu?'). Whilst it is very important to maintain overall health, many people believe that just being healthy is sufficient protection against the flu. This is not always true especially for older Australians and those with specific medical conditions. Annual influenza immunisation, given before the flu season, is an effective way of protecting yourself and others. See your Doctor or immunisation clinic for more advice regarding immunisation.

### But doesn't the flu immunisation give you the flu?

No. Influenza vaccine contains killed virus that cannot cause influenza. 'Flu-like' symptoms may occur as a result of the vaccine but these symptoms are not influenza and usually last only a few days. They indicate that your body is forming an immune response.



### How long are you contagious for?

With a cold you are contagious for about two to three days before developing symptoms and this contagious period can last until all symptoms are gone. With flu you are infectious up to 24 hours before developing symptoms and for at least 7 days after (can be up to 14-21 days in children). For both colds and flu the greatest risk of spreading the infection is when symptoms are at their worst - day 2 to day 4 of illness.

### What should I do if I get a cold?

Nearly all upper respiratory tract infections get better without any specific treatment. You should see the doctor if you have any of the following:

- poor intake of fluids
- vomiting
- intense headache
- difficulty breathing
- a high fever that does not improve with paracetamol
- no improvement in 48 hours

### What should I do if I get the flu?

Stay at home - don't go to work, and have plenty of rest, preferably in bed.

Eat what you can and drink plenty of liquids.

Paracetamol and aspirin can be taken to relieve headache, muscle pain and reduce fever.

Ask for support from family, friends or community assistance to help look after you.

You should see your doctor if you:

- have an underlying medical condition
- become short of breath
- have been sick for a week or more and are not getting better
- are unable to drink fluids

### Can I die from flu?

Most people recover fully from flu but for some it can lead to more serious complications. The elderly, the very young, and people with suppressed immune systems, heart or respiratory disease are more vulnerable to complications. Influenza is a serious illness for people in these high-risk categories and if the right precautions are not taken, it is potentially a life threatening condition.

### How can I stop the spread of colds and flu?

The viruses that cause colds and flu are in the nose, throat and lungs of those affected. These can be spread by the fine droplets that are expelled from the nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. The following simple steps can reduce the spread of respiratory infections:

- wash your hands often and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue use your upper arm or sleeve
- keep surfaces clean
- stay home if you are sick, and keep your distance from others

### Why doesn't the doctor give me antibiotics?

Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections. They do not kill the viruses that cause colds and flu. Antibiotics would only be required if the flu has led to a secondary bacterial infection. Taking antibiotics for no reason will promote the development of resistant 'super bugs'. For some people, the doctor may decide to prescribe a special antiviral medication for the flu.

**REMEMBER "WASH, WIPE, COVER – DON'T INFECT ANOTHER!"**