

Is it a cold? Or the flu?

It's hard to tell the difference. So use the chart below to figure out what's making you sick.

Talk to your doctor if you're worried

A cold and the flu can have similar symptoms. Your doctor can help you fight the right kind of infection. Especially if it's severe.

And stay home when you're sick

This helps stop viruses from spreading.



Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Usual; high (100°F to 102°F, occasionally higher, especially in young children); lasts 3 to 4 days.
Headache	Rare	Common
Aches and pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, weakness	Sometimes	Usual; can last up to 2 to 3 weeks
Exhaustion	Never	Usual; at the beginning of the illness
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest pain, cough	Mild to moderate; hacking cough	Common; can become severe
Treatment	The only things that help are symptomatic treatments with rest, plenty of fluids, and acetaminophen or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen. Children should not receive aspirin for any condition before they are 12 years old. Antihistamines and decongestants, common ingredients in over-the-counter cold medicines have not been shown to help most people.	Antiviral drugs may help but must be started early. These are especially recommended for persons at risk for flu complications including pregnant women. Everyone may benefit from symptomatic treatments such as rest, plenty of fluids and acetaminophen or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen for pain and fever. Children must not take aspirin for flu because it could cause a serious complication. Antihistamines and decongestants, common ingredients in over-the-counter cold medicines have not been shown to help most people.
Prevention	Wash your hands often with soap and water; avoid close contact with anyone with a cold.	Yearly vaccination; antiviral drugs – see your doctor.
Complications	Sinus congestion, middle ear infection, asthma	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can worsen chronic conditions; can be life-threatening. Complications more likely in the elderly, those with chronic conditions, young children and pregnant women.



Source
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/flu/documents/sick.pdf>
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