

Feeling Sick?



Cold or Flu? What to do?

- Tried-and-true home remedies can help you feel better when you find yourself “under the weather” with a cold or the flu. And a few over-the-counter medications can help relieve nasty symptoms.
- The first question is; do you have a cold or the flu? Chances are, if you had a flu shot, you don’t have influenza.
- You can still get vaccinated to protect yourself the rest of the flu season, which runs through April, according to the CDC.
- The symptoms are confusing, but here’s a simple test: People with the flu get sick more suddenly, look much sicker, and feel sick all over. High fevers, body aches, extreme fatigue and dry cough are also more likely to be flu, according to experts at eMedicineHealth. The common cold generally consists of; a runny or stuffy nose, a slight fever, and coughing.
- In either case, antibiotics are not the cure. In fact, taking these prescription medications weakens their effectiveness for when you really need them. Colds and flu are caused by viruses. Antibiotics cannot fight viruses. So reserve them for bacterial infections, and your doctor is the best judge of that.
- Often, what you need to ease the symptoms of colds and flu can be found right at home – where you should be so you aren’t coughing and sneezing and infecting others. Mary Windle, PharmD, Pharmacy Editor of eMedicine, Inc., and Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Pharmacy, offers this prescription to feel better fast:

For chest congestion:

- Drink plenty of fluids (8 to 10 cups a day) such as water, sports drinks, herbal teas, fruit drinks, or ginger ale. Fluids help break up congestion, prevent dehydration and keep your throat moist.
- Inhaled steam can ease congestion too. Create steam with a humidifier, or steam up the bathroom by running a hot shower.

For nasal congestion:

- Relieve clogged nasal and sinus passages caused by excessive mucus with either decongestant pills or with a nasal spray. These are best taken following a hot shower and lots of nose blowing to clear out the mucus as much as possible.

For fever and pain, body aches and tiredness:

- Rest in bed.
- Over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) can help decrease fever and ease sore throat pain and body aches.

For cough:

- For a dry hacking cough, you may choose a medication that contains a cough suppressant – Look for over-the-counter medications that contain dextromethorphan.
- For a cough that produces excessive mucus, or phlegm, you may want to use an expectorant that loosens phlegm. Guaifenesin is the most common active ingredient.

For sore throat:

- A warm salt-water gargle can relieve a scratchy throat.
- Lozenges, mouthwashes, and sprays that contain a numbing ingredient can ease the pain.

