

HEALTH REALLY MATTERS

Colds and Flu: A Tale of Two Viruses

Quick Facts about Colds and Flus

- Are caused by viruses that affect the respiratory tract.
- Cold viruses are rhinovirus and coronavirus.
- Influenza (the flu) is caused by Influenza A,B or C type viruses.
- The viruses are spread in droplets by sneezing, coughing or talking or touching contaminated objects (doorknobs, phone, someone's hands).
- Most over-the-counter medicines for cough, cold and flu should not be used in children under 6 years of age.

Colds

- Symptoms include runny nose, sneezing, red eyes, sore throat, cough, headache and body aches.
- Medicines for colds may help to reduce the symptoms, most symptoms last 3 – 10 days.

- Antibiotics are not effective for treating colds caused by viruses.
- If you have conditions like asthma or COPD that affect your lungs you may get colds more easily.

Influenza (flu)

- Symptoms come on faster and are usually more severe than a cold. They may include headache, chills, cough, fever, muscle aches, fatigue, running nose and watery eyes.
- The seasonal flu vaccine can help to lower your risk of getting the flu.
- Antiviral medications prescribed by the doctor within 48 hours may help to prevent serious complications and make the symptoms milder.
- In people at risk, the flu can increase the chance of being hospitalized for serious conditions like pneumonia.

Ways to avoid getting colds or flu

- WASH your hands! Regular soap is fine, antibacterial soap is not necessary.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or use a tissue.
- Throw away used tissues.
- Keep your hands away from your face.



MEDICINE CENTRE
PHARMACY

- Try to stay away from people who are sick.
- If you get sick, stay home and try to avoid young children, babies, and the elderly, as they are at higher risk of getting severely sick.
- Consider getting the seasonal flu vaccine (October to March).

Tips to help you manage your symptoms

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Try non-drug measures for your symptoms first:
 - Steam or humidifier.
 - Nasal saline spray or drops to help stuffiness.
 - Lozenges or tea with honey can help a sore throat and cough.
- Choosing a cold or flu medication can be tough as many products contain similar ingredients. Talk to your pharmacist to find the best one for you.

Your Pharmacist can

- Help you choose a safe product that won't interact with your other medicines or medical conditions.
- Discuss non-drug measures to help your symptoms.
- Suggest that you see the doctor if your symptoms sound like they may be more serious.
- Provide flu vaccine information and immunization.

Find more great information and tools here

- HealthLink BC – colds: <http://goo.gl/8POnlH>
- HealthLink BC – flu: <http://goo.gl/pKggq8h>
- Bugs and Drugs – Cold, Influenza and other Respiratory Tract Infections: <http://goo.gl/JWv4c7>
- Public Health Agency of Canada— Seasonal Flu: <http://goo.gl/2QUEIL>

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