

7 Tips For Weathering Cold And Flu Season

You've probably had many cold and flu viruses over the years. But you may still be surprised by just how bad a cold or the flu make you feel. And you may not remember what treatments work best or when to see a doctor.

From prevention to treatment, here are the top seven things you should know to help you sail through cold and flu season.

1. Get your flu shot as soon as you can, for protection for about a year.
The flu vaccine prompts your body to develop antibodies that can guard against the flu, although it can take up to two weeks for these antibodies to develop sufficiently to provide protection. The vaccine is effective until the next flu season, when new strains emerge and begin to spread through the population. [Persistent myths](#) keep some people from getting the shot, but don't let that happen to you.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises everyone over 6 months old to get the shot by the end of October, when flu season is just beginning. In most years, when the influenza vaccine is well matched to the most prevalent strains, the vaccine reduces the likelihood of catching the flu by about 50 percent—and those are pretty good odds.

2. Get care if you think you have the flu.
You may feel any or all of these symptoms: chills, high fever, too tired to get up, achy all over. Flu hits you suddenly, while a cold comes on gradually with little or no fever. [Use the cold versus flu symptom tool](#) and if you think it's the flu, seek care right away. If you're a Kaiser Permanente Washington member, you can call the [24/7 Consulting Nurse Service](#) to see if your symptoms warrant an in-person visit. [Care Clinics](#), located in 15 Bartell Drugs locations in the Puget Sound area, are another convenient option for flu care.

It's important to get a professional medical opinion if you have flu-like symptoms because the flu is a more serious viral infection than a cold, and can lead to complications like pneumonia. There are also [anti-viral treatments for the flu](#) that can shorten the virus's duration *if* taken within 48 hours of onset. Family members can receive a flu vaccine, which might prevent them from becoming infected.

3. Don't take antibiotics for the flu.
Antibiotics kill bacteria that cause bacterial infections; they don't kill viruses that cause colds or the flu. Yet for years patients have requested and received antibiotics for colds and flu. Antibiotics are ineffective for viral infections—and potentially harmful.

Now doctors are seeing increasing evidence of antibiotic resistance: bacterial infections that won't respond to any standard antibiotics. It's believed that this resistance is a result of people taking antibiotics when they don't need them (for viral infections) or failing to finish a prescription of antibiotics (stopping when they feel better). How do you know if you have a bacterial infection? In the case of strep throat, for example, a throat swab will give you a clear diagnosis. If symptoms last more than two weeks, or are associated with a high fever, shortness

of breath, significant ear pain, severe difficulty swallowing, or persistent sinus pain, then it's time to talk to your doctor.

4. Your body's defenses need time and support.
If you get the flu, drink, rest, and treat the symptoms. Rest allows more energy for your immune system. Liquids aid in mucus production and prevent dehydration. And over-the-counter medications provide temporary relief from fever, sinus congestion, and cough. And help avoid the spread of the virus by washing your hands regularly, since you could be contagious for about a week.
5. Over-the-counter medications are not always harmless.
Acetaminophen, which is found in products like Tylenol and NyQuil, can cause serious liver damage. The most you should take in any 24-hour period is 4 grams (4,000 mg). So check labels and know what you're taking. Don't double-up on doses or take multiple cold medicines.
6. Take single-ingredient medications that treat specific symptoms.
Antihistamines depress the nervous system; decongestants stimulate it. That means antihistamines—unless they're the newer non-sedating versions—can make you drowsy, while decongestants like pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) make you jittery. So don't take an antihistamine such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) before driving, and don't take a decongestant right before bed. And decongestants should not be used by those with high blood pressure, or by those taking diet pills that also have stimulating ingredients such as caffeine.
7. There is no cure for the flu or colds.
When your body fights off a virus that causes a cold or flu, it develops immunity against that virus—but only that particular virus. More than 200 viruses cause colds and flu, and these viruses mutate rapidly. That's why colds are so common, and why the flu shot formula has to be changed every year. So, get your vaccine, and if you do get sick, give your body time to heal.

Please review our business at: [Yelp](#) [City Search](#) [Google +](#) [Angie's List](#)

Did you know you can workout and exercise with a trainer at your home, office, hotel room or pretty much anywhere in the world through live 2-way webcam using Skype?

[Sign-up](#) for a class with me today.

[Click Here](#) to sign-up for our e-mail list so can receive all of our articles & download your free copy of our Dietary Information e-book.

View our books on Amazon by [Clicking Here](#). Learn how to get a free audio book with all of the key fitness and nutrition principles [here](#).

[Like us on Facebook](#)/[Connect with us on LinkedIn](#)/[Follow us on Twitter](#)

[Follow us on Google+](#)/[Pinterest](#)/[Instagram](#)/[YouTube](#)

(Hold down the Ctrl key & click the underlined words or logos)

Make sure to forward to friends and followers.