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Cold & Flu Season 101: What You Need to Know

It's that time of year again — time to stock up on cough drops, tissues, and cold medicine. This year, take your cold and flu preparation to another level. There are steps you can take in your everyday life to help prevent the cold and flu. You might be surprised at how easy it is. Coming down with something? Make sure you know if it's a cold or the flu...there are different symptoms and treatments depending on what you have.

This newsletter is dedicated to helping you learn more about the cold and flu — how you can prevent them, how to tell which one you have, and what remedies do or don't work. Follow the steps in this newsletter to stay healthy throughout cold and flu season and all year long.



The art of medicine consists in amusing the patient while **Nature** affects the cure.

— VOLTAIRE





Prevention is
better than cure.
– ERASMUS

11 Natural Tips to Prevent a Cold

There are no known cures for colds and flu, so cold and flu *prevention* should be your goal. A proactive approach to warding off colds and flu is a way to make your whole life healthier. The most effective way for preventing the flu is to get a flu shot. But there are other strategies you can employ as well. Here are some suggestions from Charles B. Inlander, president of The People's Medical Society:

1 Wash Your Hands

Most cold and flu viruses are spread by direct contact. Someone who has the flu sneezes onto a hand, and then touches the telephone, the keyboard, a kitchen glass. The germs can live for hours — in some cases weeks — only to be picked up by the next person who touches the same object. So wash your hands often. If a sink is not available, rub your hands together very hard for a minute or so. That also helps break up most of the cold germs. Or, rub an alcohol-based hand sanitizer onto your hands.

2 Don't Cover Your Sneezes and Coughs with Your Hands

Because germs and viruses cling to your bare hands, muffling coughs and sneezes with your hands results in passing along your germs to others. When you feel a sneeze or cough coming, use a tissue, then throw it away immediately. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow.

3 Don't Touch Your Face

Cold and flu viruses enter your body through the eyes, nose, or mouth. Touching their faces is the main way children catch colds, and a key way they pass colds on to their parents.

4 Drink Plenty of Fluids

Water flushes your system, washing out the poisons as it rehydrates you. A typical, healthy adult needs eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids each day. How can you tell if you're getting enough liquid? If the color of your urine runs close to clear, you're getting enough. If it's deep yellow, you need more fluids.



5 Enjoy a Sauna

Researchers aren't clear about the exact role saunas play in prevention, but one 1989 German study found that people who steamed twice a week got half as many colds as those who didn't. One theory: When you're in a sauna, you inhale air hotter than 80 degrees, a temperature too hot for cold and flu viruses to survive.

6 Do Aerobic Exercise Regularly

Aerobic exercise speeds up the heart to pump larger quantities of blood; makes you breathe faster to help transfer oxygen from your lungs to your blood; and makes you sweat once your body heats up. These exercises help increase the body's natural virus-killing cells.



7 Eat Foods Containing Phytochemicals

"Phyto" means plants, and the natural chemicals in plants give the vitamins in food a supercharged boost. So put away the vitamin pill, and eat dark green, red, and yellow vegetables and fruits.



8 Eat Yogurt

Some studies have shown that eating a daily cup of low-fat yogurt can reduce your susceptibility to colds by 25%. Researchers think the beneficial bacteria in yogurt may stimulate production of immune system substances that fight disease.

9 Don't Smoke

Statistics show that heavy smokers get more severe colds and more frequent ones.

Even being around smoke profoundly zaps the immune system. Smoke dries out your nasal passages and paralyzes cilia. These are the delicate hairs that line the mucous membranes in your nose and lungs, and with their wavy movements, sweep cold and flu viruses out of the nasal passages. Experts contend that *one* cigarette can paralyze cilia for as long as 30 to 40 minutes.



10 Cut Alcohol Consumption

Heavy alcohol use suppresses the immune system in a variety of ways. Heavier drinkers are more prone to initial infections as well as secondary complications. Alcohol also dehydrates the body — it actually causes more fluid loss from your system than it puts in.

11 Relax

If you can teach yourself to relax, you can activate your immune system on demand. There's evidence that when you put your relaxation skills into action, your interleukins — leaders in the immune system response against cold and flu viruses — increase in the bloodstream. Train yourself to picture an image you find pleasant or calming. Do this 30 minutes a day for several months. Keep in mind, relaxation is a learnable skill, but it is *not* doing nothing. People who try to relax, but are in fact bored, show no changes in blood chemicals.

Source: WebMD

Starve a Cold, Feed a Fever?

It's one of the most well-known medical sayings around: starve a cold, feed a fever. Or is it feed a cold, starve a fever?

Either way, it may not matter. Scientists have found little evidence for either one. How these claims came about is unclear. One popular but unproven theory is that fasting during a fever helps lower body temperature, while eating plenty of food helps raise it, thus helping to fight off a cold.

Perhaps the only study suggesting that either claim had any validity was published in the journal *Clinical and Diagnostic Laboratory Immunology* in 2002 by a team of Dutch scientists. They found that eating a meal increases a type of immune response that fights off the viruses responsible for colds, while fasting seemed to stimulate an immune response that could help fight off the infections associated with most fevers.

But other scientists have said those findings have little merit because the study involved a small number of subjects and has not been replicated. Most doctors, and years of research on cold and flu sufferers, say there is only one tried-and-true treatment: plenty of rest and fluids. It helps to know that once a person has contracted a cold or the flu, it will run its course in 5 to 10 days. If you suspect you're coming down with the flu, you may want to see your doctor for medication.

THE BOTTOM LINE: There is little scientific evidence behind the notion of starving a cold and feeding a fever, or vice versa.

Source: www.nytimes.com

Cold or Flu? Which One Do You Have?

How do you know if you're coming down with a common cold or the flu? Because flu symptoms are quite similar to cold symptoms, it's often hard to tell the difference. But there is one clue about flu that can help you know. When you have the flu, you feel flu symptoms sooner than you would cold symptoms, and they come on with much greater intensity.

What Are the Symptoms of the Flu?

With the flu, you may feel very weak and fatigued for up to two or three weeks. You'll have muscle aches and periods of chills and sweats as fever comes and goes. You may also have a stuffy or runny nose, headache, and sore throat.

Can I Compare Flu and Cold Symptoms?

Yes. The following chart can help you compare flu symptoms with cold symptoms. Use it to learn the differences and similarities between flu and cold symptoms. Then, if you get flu symptoms, call your doctor and ask about an antiviral drug.

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Characteristic, high (100-102 degrees F); lasts three to four days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General aches, pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, weakness	Quite mild	Can last 2-3 weeks
Extreme Exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Mild to moderate; hacking cough	Common; can become severe
Complications	Sinus congestion or earache	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can be life-threatening
Prevention	Good hygiene	Annual flu shot or Flu Mist
Treatment	Only temporary relief of symptoms	Antiviral drugs (Tamiflu or Relenza) within 24-48 hours of onset

Source: *WebMD*

Flu Shots: Fact or Myth



“The flu is just like a bad cold.”

MYTH

Influenza (flu) is far more dangerous than a bad cold. It is a disease of the lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia.



“Even if I get a flu shot, I can still get a mild case of the flu.”

TRUE

This can happen, but the flu shot usually protects most people from the flu. However, the flu shot will not protect you from other viruses that can cause illnesses and sometimes feel like the flu.



“Not everyone can take the flu vaccine.”

TRUE

If you are allergic to eggs (used in making the vaccine), are very ill with a high fever, or have had a severe reaction to the flu vaccine in the past, you might not be able to get this protection.



“The flu shot can give you the flu.”

MYTH

The flu shot *cannot* cause the flu. Flu vaccine does not protect you from other viruses that sometimes feel like the flu. If you get the flu or get sick after a flu shot, it is because you were actually exposed to someone with the flu virus prior to receiving the shot.



“The side effects of the vaccine are worse than the flu.”

MYTH

The worst side effect you’re likely to get from a flu shot is a sore arm. The risk of a rare allergic reaction is far less than the risk of severe complications from influenza.



“Only older people need the flu vaccine.”

MYTH

Adults and children with conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease and kidney disease need to get a flu shot. Doctors recommend children six months through 18 years of age get the vaccination.



Top Five Myths about Colds

- 1 Antibiotics can kill the germs that cause colds
- 2 Changes in the weather can cause colds
- 3 Getting wet and chilled can cause colds
- 4 Sitting in a draft can cause colds
- 5 Avoiding changes in temperature will help prevent colds

Source: www.cdc.gov/flu



Cold Remedies: What Works, What Doesn't, What Can't Hurt

There's no cure for the common cold. But what about cold remedies that claim to make you feel better faster? Find out what's effective — and what's not.

Cold remedies are almost as common as the common cold, and many are nearly as ancient. The use of chicken soup as a congestion cure dates back centuries. But is longevity any guarantee that a cold remedy works? Do effective cold remedies even exist? Here's a look at some common cold remedies and what's known about them.


Cold remedies: What works

If you catch a cold, you can expect to be sick for one to two weeks. But that doesn't mean you have to be miserable. These remedies may help:

- **Water and other fluids.** You can't flush a cold out of your system, but drinking plenty of liquids can help. Water, juice, clear broth or warm lemon water with honey helps loosen congestion and prevents dehydration. Avoid alcohol, coffee and caffeinated sodas, which make dehydration worse.
- **Salt water.** A saltwater gargle — 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon salt dissolved in an 8-ounce glass of warm water — can temporarily relieve a sore or scratchy throat.
- **Saline nasal drops and sprays.** Over-the-counter saline nasal drops and sprays combat stuffiness and congestion. In infants, experts recommend instilling several saline drops into one nostril, then gently suctioning that nostril with a bulb syringe (push the bulb in about 1/4 to 1/2 inch, or about 6 to 12 millimeters). Saline nasal sprays may be used in older children. Unlike nasal decongestants, saline drops and sprays don't lead to a rebound effect — a worsening of symptoms when the medication is discontinued — and most are safe and nonirritating, even for children.
- **Chicken soup.** Generations of parents have spooned chicken soup into their sick children. Now scientists have put chicken soup to the test, discovering that it does have effects that might help relieve cold and flu symptoms in two ways. First, it acts as an anti-inflammatory by inhibiting the movement of neutrophils — immune system cells that participate in the body's inflammatory response. Second, it temporarily speeds up the movement of mucus, possibly helping relieve congestion and limiting the amount of time viruses are in contact with the nose lining.
- **Over-the-counter cold and cough medications in older children and adults.** Non-prescription decongestants and pain relievers offer some symptom relief, but they won't prevent a cold or shorten its duration, and most have some side effects. If used for more than a few days, they can actually make symptoms worse.

Experts agree that these medications are dangerous in children younger than age 2. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is evaluating the safety of over-the-counter cold and cough medications in older children.

Keep in mind that acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) can cause serious liver damage or liver failure if taken in doses higher than recommended. It's common for people to take Tylenol in addition to flu medications that also contain acetaminophen, which can lead to acetaminophen overdoses. Read the labels of any cold medication carefully to make sure you're not overdosing.



If a doctor treats your cold, it will go away in fourteen days. If you leave it alone, it will go away in two weeks.

— GLORIA SILVERSTEIN

If a cough lasts after your other cold symptoms have resolved, see your doctor. In the meantime, try soothing your throat with warm lemon water and honey and humidifying the air in your house. Avoid giving honey to infants.

- **Antihistamines.** First-generation (sedating) antihistamines may provide minor relief of several cold symptoms, including cough, sneezing, watery eyes and nasal discharge. However, results are conflicting and the benefits may not outweigh the side effects.
- **Humidity.** Cold viruses thrive in dry conditions — another reason why colds are more common in winter. Dry air also dries the mucous membranes, causing a stuffy nose and scratchy throat. A humidifier can add moisture to your home, but it can also add mold, fungi and bacteria if not cleaned properly. Change the water in your humidifier daily, and clean the unit according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Cold remedies: What doesn't work

The list of ineffective cold remedies is long. A few of the more common ones that don't work include:

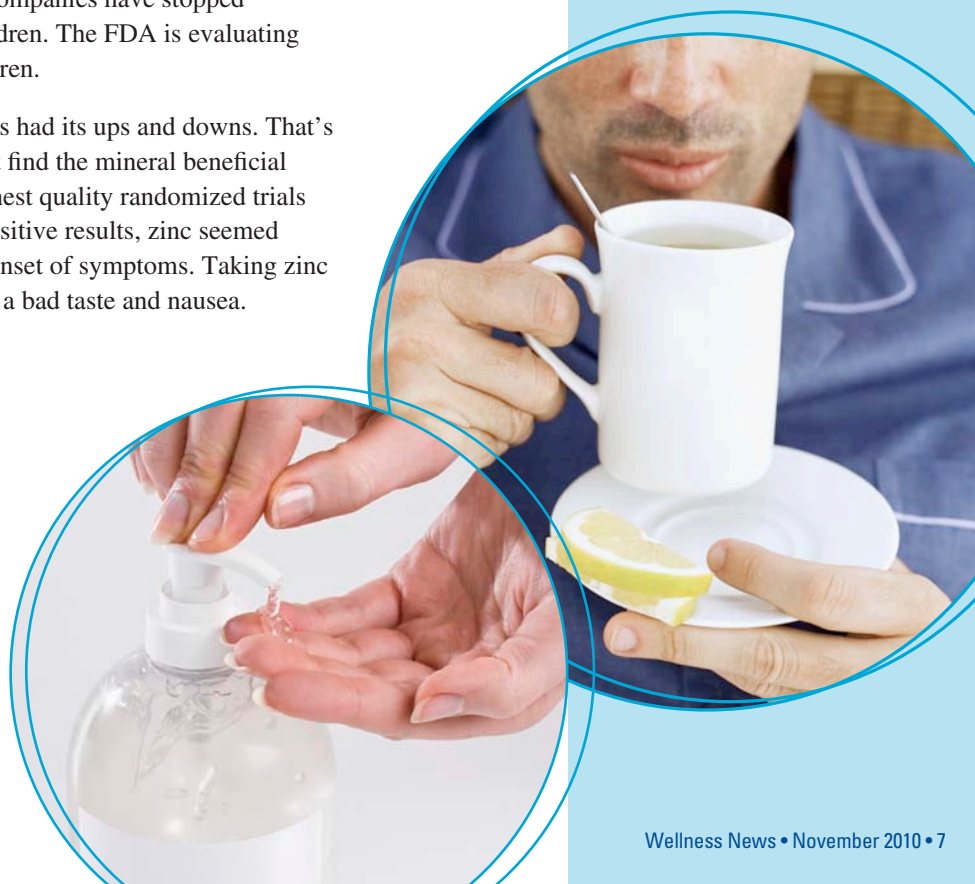
- **Antibiotics.** These destroy bacteria, but they're no help against cold viruses. Avoid asking your doctor for antibiotics for a cold or using old antibiotics you have on hand. You won't get well any faster, and inappropriate use of antibiotics contributes to the serious and growing problem of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
- **Over-the-counter cold and cough medications in young children.** OTC cold and cough medications may cause serious and even life-threatening side effects in children. The FDA warns against their use in children younger than age 2. The Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) has voluntarily modified consumer product labels on over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medicines to state "do not use" in children under 4 years of age, and many companies have stopped manufacturing these products for young children. The FDA is evaluating the safety of these medications in older children.
- **Zinc.** The cold-fighting reputation of zinc has had its ups and downs. That's because many zinc studies — both those that find the mineral beneficial and those that do not — are flawed. The highest quality randomized trials generally show no benefit. In studies with positive results, zinc seemed most effective taken within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms. Taking zinc with food may reduce side effects, including a bad taste and nausea.

Intranasal zinc may result in permanent damage to the sense of smell. The FDA has issued a warning against using three zinc-containing nasal cold remedies because they had been associated with a long-lasting or permanent loss of smell (anosmia).



The first
wealth is
health.

– RALPH WALDO
EMERSON



A man too busy to take care of his health is like a mechanic too busy to take care of his tools.

– SPANISH PROVERB



Cold remedies: What probably doesn't hurt

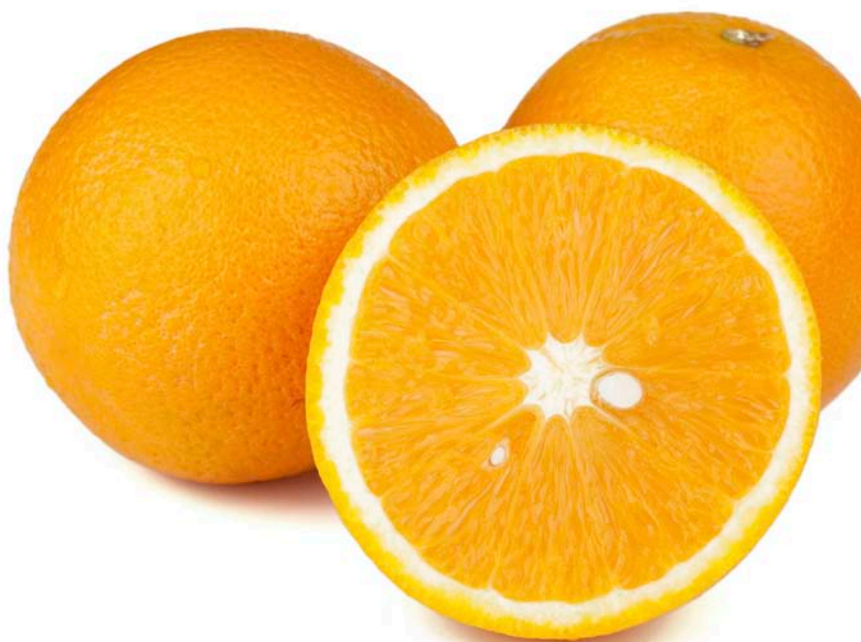
In spite of ongoing studies, the scientific jury is still out on popular cold remedies such as vitamin C and echinacea. Here's an update:

- **Vitamin C.** It appears that for the most part taking vitamin C won't help the average person prevent colds. However, taking vitamin C before the onset of cold symptoms may shorten the duration of symptoms. Vitamin C may provide a benefit for people at high risk of colds due to frequent exposure — for example, children who attend group child care during the winter.
- **Echinacea.** Studies on the effectiveness of echinacea at preventing or shortening colds are mixed. Some studies show no benefit. Others show a significant reduction in the severity and duration of cold symptoms when taken in the early stages of a cold. One reason study results have been inconclusive may be that the type of echinacea plant and preparation used from one study to the next have varied considerably. Research on the role of echinacea in treating the common cold is ongoing. In the meantime, if your immune system is healthy and you are not taking prescription medications, using echinacea supplements is unlikely to cause harm.

Take care of yourself

Although usually minor, colds can make you feel miserable. It's tempting to try the latest remedy, but the best thing you can do is take care of yourself. Rest, drink fluids and remember to wash your hands frequently.

Source: www.mayoclinic.com



"Partners 2 Health" is the companywide initiative for employees and their families to work together with Gulfstream to achieve a healthy life and reduce healthcare costs. Under this partnership, Gulfstream will supply the resources (medical plans and health-related information) and families will make informed decisions (taking into consideration that health guidance) to maintain or improve their health. In addition to substituting for the preposition "to" ("Acting as partners will lead to better health"), the "2" signifies the two partners (employees and Gulfstream) and the two phases (short-term and long-term) of everyone's health. Additionally, the "2" represents the two goals of the initiative — the primary goal of better health and the secondary goal of lower healthcare costs.