

# healthdirect

## Cold or flu?

### Know the difference



Colds are very common. They are caused by about 200 different viruses. There is no vaccine for a cold.



The flu is a viral infection affecting your nose, throat and sometimes your lungs. A vaccine is available for the flu.



Good hygiene reduces the spread of colds and flu, especially after coughing and sneezing.

### Understand the symptoms



#### Body aches/pain

**COLDS** Slight  
**FLU** Usual, often severe



#### Fever

**COLDS** Rare  
**FLU** Usual, lasts 3 to 4 days



#### Sore throat

**COLDS** Common  
**FLU** Sometimes



#### Chest discomfort/cough

**COLDS** Mild to moderate, hacking cough  
**FLU** Common, can become severe



#### Headache

**COLDS** Rare  
**FLU** Common



#### Fatigue/weakness

**COLDS** Sometimes  
**FLU** Usual, can last up to 2 to 3 weeks



#### Sneezing

**COLDS** Usual  
**FLU** Sometimes



#### Extreme exhaustion

**COLDS** Never  
**FLU** Usual, at the beginning of the illness

Still not sure if it's a cold or flu? healthdirect's Symptom Checker can help you decide what to do next  
[www.healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)

### Myths vs reality

#### Top colds and flu myths debunked

**✗ Myth:** The flu is not a serious illness.

**✓ Fact:** The flu is a highly contagious and potentially life-threatening disease.

**✗ Myth:** Colds and the flu can be treated with antibiotics

**✓ Fact:** Antibiotics won't cure a cold or flu. Antibiotics only work against bacteria not viral infections.

**✗ Myth:** Vitamin C supplements can prevent the flu or colds.

**✓ Fact:** There is no evidence to support vitamin C supplements as a way of preventing colds or flu.

**✗ Myth:** Healthy people don't need to be vaccinated..

**✓ Fact:** Everyone can benefit from the flu vaccine. If you are at higher risk group, the vaccine is free.

**✗ Myth:** You can catch a cold or the flu from cold weather or getting caught in the rain.

**✓ Fact:** The flu or colds are caused by viruses and not by cold climates or being exposed to cold air.

**✗ Myth:** I'm pregnant, so I shouldn't have the flu jab because it will affect my baby.

**✓ Fact:** The flu shot is safe for pregnant women at all stages of their pregnancy.

At high risk of becoming seriously ill from flu?  
Talk to your doctor or pharmacist



Elderly



Pregnant women



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



Existing serious medical conditions



Why

Annual vaccination is the best way of preventing the flu and any associated illness.



Cost

The flu vaccine is available FREE under the National Immunisation Program for people at high risk.



Where

Vaccine is available from doctors, pharmacies and other vaccination providers.