

Common Cold

What causes the common cold?

The common cold, also known as an upper respiratory infection (URI), can be caused by any of more than 200 types of viruses, including coronaviruses and rhinoviruses. These viruses attack and multiply in the cells that line the nose and throat.

What are the symptoms?

Usually lasting about 1-2 weeks, the common cold may cause symptoms such as:

Scratchy/sore throat	Clear nasal discharge	Sneezing
Tenderness around the eyes	Stuffy nose	Watery eyes
Full feeling in the ears	Achiness/tiredness	Cough

How is the common cold spread?

Contrary to popular belief, colds are not spread primarily through coughing or sneezing. Colds are more commonly spread hand-to-hand. If you shake, touch, or hold the hand of an infected person (who may not have obvious symptoms) and then touch your eyes or nose, you are likely to infect yourself with the virus. In addition, you can “catch” a cold if you touch your eyes or nose after touching a hard, nonporous surface (such as a phone or doorknob) shortly after an infected person touched it.

How do I prevent myself from getting the common cold?

As with any virus, the best way to protect yourself from getting the disease is to wash your hands often with soap and water, using hand sanitizer if soap and water aren’t available. You can also try:

Avoiding touching your face	Use disposable tissues	Avoiding contact with people who are sick
Eat a balanced diet	Monitor stress levels	Keep room humidity moderate to high
Frequently sanitize high-touch surfaces	Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hands	

Is there a cure for the common cold?

No. Experts estimate that Americans suffer about 1 billion colds per year and there is still no sure in sight. The good news is that every healthy person has an immune system that is specifically able to destroy cold viruses. Your body will respond with symptoms 3 to 4 days after the cold virus invasion. At the present time, most cold-care suggestions are aimed at symptoms relief and immune system support. There is no medicine that directly attacks the cold virus.

Treatment DO'S and DON'T'S for the Common Cold

DO	DON'T
<p>Increase fluid intake. It thins secretions and soothes the throat, especially warm liquids.</p> <p>Gargle with salt water. Use 1 teaspoon of salt in a large glass of warm water every 4 hours. This helps reduce swelling in the throat. Numbing throat sprays can be used for sore throat also.</p> <p>Get plenty of rest to allow time to recover.</p> <p>Take aspirin, ibuprofen, or acetaminophen (e.g.: Excedrin, Motrin, Tylenol) to ease aches and pains and lower fever.</p> <p>Inhale warm, moist air to soothe inflamed mucus membranes. Get a humidifier, take a warm shower, put a pan of water on your radiator.</p> <p>Consider taking zinc. It may shorten the duration of a cold by 2-3 days.</p>	<p>Use an antibiotic like penicillin to treat colds. These do not work on viral infections and lead to antibiotic resistance in bacterial infections.</p> <p>Do not request an antibiotic from your healthcare provider unless lab results confirm bacterial infection or your provider finds your symptoms suggest you have one.</p> <p>Smoke or vape. This can further irritate nasal and throat passages increasing your risk of bronchitis or pneumonia.</p> <p>Drink alcohol. It is dehydrating and slows recovery.</p>

Over-the-Counter Treatments for the Common Cold

<p>Decongestants. Opens blocked nasal passages. Look for cold medications with "D" in the name. Consult health care provider before taking if you have high blood pressure.</p>	<p>Mucolytics. Loosen thick secretions, help with dry, hacking coughs and post-nasal drip (mucus in the back of the throat). Common types are Robitussin and Mucinex.</p>
<p>Cough suppressants. Suppress cough reflex caused from thickened secretions in throat. Use when you have dry cough/cough that interferes with sleep. Found in Robitussin DM, NyQuil, and Delsym.</p>	<p>Nasal sprays. Relieve blocked nasal passages. Do not use medicated sprays for more than 3 days, can cause nasal tissues to become "dependent". Best to use salt water (saline) sprays to relieve dryness and nosebleeds.</p>
<p>Antihistamines. Help dry out secretions, good for runny nose, watery eyes. Common types are Benadryl, Allegra, Zyrtec, Claritin.</p>	