

Seasonal common cold & influenza



What's in this patient handout?

- An overview of common cold and influenza
- Symptoms
- How can I protect myself?
- Nutritional and herbal recommendations

An overview of common cold & influenza

The common cold is a viral infection affecting the nose, throat and upper airways with mild or moderately severe symptoms. There are several viruses responsible for colds (e.g. rhinoviruses) and it is possible to have several colds successively.

Influenza, commonly known as 'flu', is a viral infection affecting the nose, throat, and potential lungs. The typical symptoms of the flu include fever, sore throat, tiredness and muscle aches. In people with underlying health conditions, flu might lead to serious complications such as pneumonia. Check with your health professional if you are unsure.

Most acute respiratory infections are viral in origin and are transmitted via:

- Inhalation of small-particle aerosols (containing the virus).
- Exposure to droplets from an infected person via sneeze or cough.
- Exposure via hand contact to virus-containing secretions either from a person or contaminated surfaces.
- Touching eyes, face, nose or mouth with contaminated hands.

Flu can be spread from an infected person to others 1 day before and 5 days after getting sick.

There are currently no known cures for cold or flu and treatments other than to address symptom management.

What do I do if I have symptoms?

- Stay at home when sick to avoid spreading the flu.
- Cover your face when sneezing or coughing.
- Wash hands regularly and wipe surfaces.
- If you live with an infected person, maintain distance, wash hands regularly and clean potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Avoid sharing cups, plates and cutlery with other people.

Symptom	Common cold	Flu
Onset	Gradual (1 – 3 days)	Sudden (within a few hours)
Site of infection	Upper respiratory tract	Entire respiratory tract
Runny or stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Cough	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Exhaustion	Rare	Early and prominent
Feeling tired & weak	Sometimes (mild)	Common (can be severe)
Chest discomfort	Sometimes (mild)	Common (can be severe)
Fever	Rare	Prominent
Headache	Rare	Prominent (can be severe)

Long term holistic treatment aims

- Improve digestive health by addressing inflammation, dysbiosis, intestinal permeability and gastric secretion regulation.
- Manage and maintain healthy blood cholesterol levels.



How can I protect myself from common colds and flu?

- Practicing good hygiene is the best way to protect yourself from common colds and flu.
- Wash hands regularly using soap and water before and after eating or preparing food, and after using the restroom
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-95%) if water isn't available as these kill most germs that cause disease and illness.
- Use paper towels to dry your hands; don't share cloth towels.
- Be aware of germs on your computer keyboards, mobile and door handles.
- When traveling on public transport ensure adequate hygiene when touching any surface.

Treatment aims

Cold and flu symptoms should improve within 7 - 10 days without special treatment and the main aim is to relieve cold and flu symptoms. Options for symptom relief include:

- Rest is the single most important treatment in recovering from the symptoms of cold and flu. Adequate time for full recovery is essential, especially after an acute infection. It is strongly recommended not to go straight back to work but to allow additional time for full recovery and extra sleep time. Adequate rest also supports immune function in fighting illness.
- Drink plenty of water and non-alcoholic fluids to keep hydrated, especially important if you experience fever and sweating.
- Eat a healthy and balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke.
- Get enough sleep - extra hours of sleep might be needed to give your body the energy to recover.
- Sore throat can be relieved by gargling with warm salty water, a throat lozenge or drinking hot water with honey and freshly squeezed lemon juice.

Nutritional and herbal treatment recommendations

- Please contact your health professional for the prescription of nutritional or herbal supplements.

Zinc & vitamin C

- Zinc plays a significant role to relieve symptoms and to help prevent common cold through immune regulation. Sources: Egg yolks, ginger, oysters, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, beef.
- Vitamin C helps support the immune system, regulates cortisol levels, and support the body's stress response. Sources: Capsicum, pawpaw, citrus fruit, parsley, broccoli, blackcurrant.
- If vitamin supplements are taken, it is better to smaller doses more regularly during the day in order to maintain a more consistent level of the active ingredients as well as support optimum absorption of vitamins.

Broths

- Broths made from vegetables, beans or homemade chicken soup help to provide immune supportive nutrients while being psychologically comforting during times of convalescence.

Hot lemon drink with fresh grated ginger

- Traditional recipe to address the rhinitis component of symptoms; Juice one whole lemon and add to hot water with honey, ginger and garlic.

Pelargonium sidoides (Kalobo)

- Immune enhancing and anti-bacterial; might help to reduce the severity and duration of symptoms.

Euphrasia officinalis (Eyebright)

- Anti-catarrhal, anti-inflammatory herbal remedy that helps with respiratory conditions with excess mucus production.

Echinacea spp.

- Anti-inflammatory and immune modulating, this herb helps to support with the natural resistance to infections in the upper respiratory tract (caution during lactation and in children).



Recommendations for maintaining a healthy immune system to prevent common cold and flu

Balanced diet

- Eat a balanced diet including plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Limit foods containing saturated fat, added salt, sugars and alcohol as these are associated with increased risk of chronic diseases long-term.
- Digestive health has shown to be associated with immune health. If you experience digestive issues seek the help of your healthcare professional for dietary advice.

Physical activity

- Be active most days of the week. Accumulate 150 – 300 minutes (2.5 – 5 hours) of moderate intense physical activity weekly and break up long periods of sitting.
- Physical activity has been associated with better overall health and may support you in the prevention of becoming sick.

Adequate rest

- Adequate sleep is important for optimal immune health. Sleep deprivation has been shown to suppress immune function. Adults need between 7 – 9 hours of sleep every night.

Seek Medical Care

Treatment recommendations should be carried out concomitant to, and not replace medical treatment. Please consult your medical doctor for advice with compatibility of nutritional/ herbal recommendation and any medicine you take.

Disclaimer: This is not an all-inclusive comprehensive list of information. Consult a qualified healthcare provider before starting any therapy. Application of clinical judgement is necessary.