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**
  - **Common cold**: Rare
  - **Flu**: Common

- **Sore throat**
  - **Common cold**: Rare
  - **Flu**: Common

- **Headache**
  - **Common cold**: Rare
  - **Flu**: Common

- **Fever**
  - **Common cold**: Rare, lasts 3 to 4 days
  - **Flu**: Rare

- **Cough**
  - **Common cold**: Rare, lasts 3 to 4 days
  - **Flu**: Common

- **Fatigue/weakness**
  - **Common cold**: Rare
  - **Flu**: Common

- **Sneezing**
  - **Common cold**: Rare
  - **Flu**: Common

- **Chest discomfort/cough**
  - **Common cold**: Rare
  - **Flu**: Common

- **Extreme exhaustion**
  - **Common cold**: Rare
  - **Flu**: Common

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

Myths vs reality

- **Myth**: The flu is not a serious illness.
  - **Fact**: The flu is a highly contagious and potentially life-threatening disease.

- **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**: 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**: 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**: Healthy people don’t need to be vaccinated.
  - **Fact**: Everyone can benefit from the flu vaccine. If you are at high risk group, the vaccine is free.

- **Myth**: I’m pregnant, so I shouldn’t have the flu shot 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**
  - **Why**: Annual vaccination is the best way of preventing the flu and any associated illness.
  - **How**: The flu vaccine is available FREE under the National Immunisation Program for people at high risk.

- **Pregnant women**
  - **Why**: Vaccination reduces the risk of hospitalisation and death from flu.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**
  - **Why**: Vaccination reduces the risk of serious illness.

- **Existing serious medical conditions**
  - **Why**: Vaccination reduces the risk of severe complications.

- **Why**: Annual vaccination is the best way of preventing the flu and any associated illness.
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