



Cold or Flu?

What is the difference between the common cold and the flu?

Colds, vomiting and diarrhea (often referred to as "the stomach flu") and other viral infections are often confused with the flu but different viruses cause them.

How you can tell the difference between the flu and a cold:

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU
Fever	Rare	Usual, high fever (39°/102°F- 40°C/104°F); sudden onset, lasts 3-4 days Note: the elderly and people who have a weakened immune system may not develop a fever.
Headache	Rare	Usual, can be sudden
Muscle aches & pains	Sometimes, generally mild	Usual, often severe
Tiredness & weakness	Sometimes, generally mild	Usual, severe, may last 2-3 weeks or more
Extreme Fatigue	Unusual	Usual, early onset, can be severe
Runny, stuffy nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Common
Cough/chest discomfort	Sometimes, mild to moderate	Common, can become moderate to severe. Cough may last for weeks.
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or infection, and ear aches.***	Can lead to pneumonia, can worsen a current chronic condition, can be life threatening.

*** Colds do not generally result in serious health problems such as pneumonia or bacterial infections

Note: Children may also experience the croup, ear infections, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea when they have the flu – symptoms that are not common in adults.

This information is posted on our Public Health Unit websites.