

## THE COMMON COLD AND INFLUENZA

In your new communal environment at college, it is doubtful that you will be able to avoid the viral maladies of the common cold and flu.

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**“Everyone is out with the flu, the computers all have a virus and the shredder just threw up.”**

Just remember colds and flu are both viruses. Your first reaction to a head cold should not be going off to the clinic to get a prescription for an antibiotic. This is one of my pet peeves! Yes, generations of doctors have set the stage for the overuse of antibiotics, but the reality is with a viral

infection, you can manage symptoms, but basically you have to ride it out.

### **Did you know?**

We have been surrounded by viruses since the dawn of time. There are many viruses that inhabit us and actually keep the bacteria in check! We are coming to understand there is a place for viruses in the human microbiome. It is about a healthy balance.

When that balance is tipped, our immune system usually squelches them long before we even notice symptoms. Sometimes our body loses the battle for a short time and that is when we feel symptoms.

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### **Symptoms of a viral cold:**

- Headache
- Sneezing
- Runny Nose
- Congestion
- Dry Cough
- General Malaise
- Possibly a Low Grade Fever (Under 101.5F)

An upper respiratory infection (URI) will take 7-14 days to clear out. The timeline looks something like this:

- 2-3 days that you feel something coming on
- 5-8 days when you feel lousy, but not hospital sick
- 3-4 days to fully recover

### **Why Antibiotics are not the answer for viral conditions:**

Antibiotics are not a quick fix that will make this timeline move any faster just because you have an exam or a big weekend planned.

### **Why?**

Bacteria are a group of wily organisms and will mutate rapidly in response to the antibiotics. This will render them ineffective at a future time when you need them.

#### **FOR SCIENCE GEEKS:**

This resistance is then passed on to not only the offspring of those bacteria (vertical gene transfer or evolution), but they can actually pass this genetic information between species present inside you (horizontal gene transfer). It's amazing what's going on inside your body.

The best thing you can do is to support your body's ability to handle the "evil" virus and have faith that your body can overcome this.

**Measures that support your body through a cold always include:**

- More Sleep
- Increased Water
- Nutritious Food-Chicken noodle soup is an age old remedy that has some research to back its effectiveness.

**How to control symptoms and feel somewhat better.**

*(Always read the precautions and potential side effects before purchasing any of these as they are not all appropriate for everyone. Think of allergies, heart or seizure issues, diabetes, etc.)*

- Guaifenesin – Mucolytic: This breaks up mucus in the lungs and sinus.
- Pseudoephedrine is a decongestant. (Sudafed)
- Coracidan is an antihistamine and cough suppressant combined. (chlorpheniramine and dextromethorphan)

- Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen for fever, pain or headache.
- Fluticasone or triamcinolone are nasal steroids that help with the post nasal drip.
- Dextromethorphan is a cough suppressant.
- Cough Drops and Sore throat lozenges

**Additionally:**

The following remedies have some evidence to help for symptoms.

- Vitamin C in high doses – eat whole fruit, peppers, and tomatoes – (packets and pills are available, but not as effective)
- Zinc – lozenges not sprays
- Garlic – (maybe the stinky breath scares the virus away) 😊
- Lemon, (vitamin C), and honey have been used for generations and honey can be as effective as dextromethorphan cough suppressants for some.
- Eucalyptus, menthol and camphor often offer some temporary relief of cold symptoms.

Make sure you have a few of this on hand so you don't have to go out to the pharmacy when you are already sick.

*So, if you thought you felt bad with a cold, wait until you get the flu!*

**Symptoms of influenza, in addition to cold symptoms:**

- Acute onset of high fever
- Severe headache
- Body aches
- Nausea
- The general feeling that you have been suddenly hit by a Mack truck.

The miracle of modern living has provided us with a couple of antiviral agents that can shorten the severity of the flu, if you act quickly. See your medical practitioner within 48 hours to determine what treatment is necessary.

Just as with a cold, ways to feel better are symptom dependent. It is critical to get more rest and plenty of fluids.

**When it becomes dangerous!**

*Dehydration and pneumonia are known complications of influenza, so if you feel you're getting worse, it is always a*

*good idea to get checked out. It may turn out that you need some IV fluids or something to relieve the dehydration or nausea.*

*In addition, take heed with your flu symptoms if you have any other underlying disease including, diabetes (Type 1 or 2), asthma, HIV, or any autoimmune disease, or if you are on any immune suppressing drugs.*

*For those that fall into this high-risk category, you will need to go the clinic or the ER to be fully evaluated.*

Don't forget, you are not under the watchful eyes of your nurturing parents anymore, so better to err on the side of caution.

## SORE THROATS

### Symptoms of Strep Throat:

- Throat sore or scratchy
- Often a fever emerges
- Sometimes nausea
- Occasionally a Headache

**NOTE:** As it is caused by bacteria, with strep you won't have the typical symptoms of a cold like runny nose, sneezing and coughing.

### **What does it look like?**

Looking in your throat, the back on either side might show you swollen tonsils and often white exudate (pus).

However, the pus does not mean it is definitely from the bacteria *Streptococcus*. The sore throat could still be from a virus, acid reflux or from irritation from post nasal drip.

### **How to know for sure?**

The only way to know for sure is have a medical professional evaluate you and decide if you need a rapid strep test or not. This test takes about ten minutes. They may also send out a throat culture that takes about four days to confirm.

If it is strep, you most likely will be prescribed a course of antibiotics. Do not stop taking them when you feel better, you must complete the whole prescription.

**Other ways to feel better:**

- Gargle with salt water.
- Avoid dairy as it tends to make you feel “phlegmy” and it hurts to clear your throat.
- Sleep as much as you are able.
- Drink lots of water and eat easy to swallow, but healthy food.
- Use zinc lozenges, acetaminophen, ibuprofen and curcumin.

**Grow back that “inner garden!”**

Antibiotics kill the good and bad bacteria. To replace some of these beneficial bacteria consider taking some probiotics such as *S. boulardii* twice a day with food. Keep this up for at least two weeks after you finish the antibiotics. Eat some fermented foods and plenty of “prebiotics” (veggies and good fiber foods) to help replenish the good bacteria.

**Symptoms of Mononucleosis**

- Sore Throat
- White Exudate (Junk) on Your Tonsils
- Super Tired – You Just Want to Sleep

- Tender Swollen Lymph Nodes on Your Neck, Groin or Armpits

Mononucleosis otherwise affectionately known as the “kissing disease” seems to run rampant on college campuses. This disease is caused by Epstein Barr virus or EBV.

### **How to know for sure?**

If you have only sore throat symptoms for several days, yet don't seem to be getting better, go to the campus clinic and ask for a blood test for mono.

If the test is positive, call your parents and let them know what is happening, so they can support you through the illness. This is a virus, so there is no treatment, no “magical cure.” Mono usually takes several weeks for a full recovery, and sometimes even up to a year to feel as energetic as you did before.

### **What should you do?**

- Drink lots and lots of water.
- Rest every chance you get.

- Take ibuprofen for fever and pain.
- Sleep, sleep and more sleep.
- Eat healthy nutrient dense food, such as chicken noodle soup.
- Gargle with salt water.

### **When it becomes dangerous!**

*The fact is you're often going to feel sick and exhausted with this disease. If you think you are worse than expected, then you should see your PCP and be checked for complications, such as an enlarged liver and spleen. This is commonly found with mono and can be a cause for concern.*

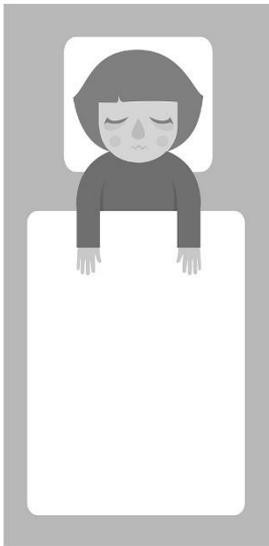
*If you have been told you have elevated liver function tests, an enlarged spleen or liver, DO follow up and be rechecked.*

### **What should you avoid?**

- Tylenol as it gets broken down in the liver
- Contact sports, as a ball to the gut could cause intraabdominal bleeding

## IS IT A COLD OR THE FLU ?

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### COLD



LOSS OF  
APPETITE



SORE  
THROAT



SNEEZING



COUGH



VOMITING

### FLU



MUSCLE  
PAIN



HIGH  
FEVER



HEADACHE

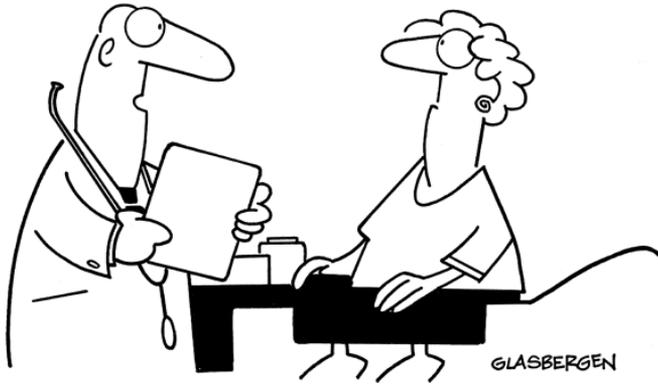


FATIGUE



CHILLS

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**“I looked up your symptoms on Google.  
If you want a second opinion, I can check Yahoo.”**