

# Your Health Matters! By Angela Kwok Pharmacist at Cunderdin Pharmacy

## Cold, Flu & Coughs: Symptoms and Management

Cold is contagious but it occurs gradually with less severe symptoms than flu; human rhinoviruses cause most common cold with majority of the healthy people recover between 7-10 days.

Influenza "flu" develops suddenly, causing tiredness, high fever, cough, severe joints and muscles pain. Influenza viruses are responsible for major outbreaks of respiratory illness around the world, especially during winter months. They can cause severe illness including chest complications such as pneumonia and bronchitis, which may require hospitalisation or even cause death.

Both cold and flu can spread through nasal secretion that contains the virus such as by coughing or sneezing. Most commonly, it is from direct contact on hard surface or people's hand. When the hands contact these viruses, they can then transfer the germs to the nasal passage when people touch their eyes or nose. Regular hand washing with soap and water or using alcohol based (60-95% ethanol) hand sanitiser are best defense against virus or bacteria that can cause cold and flu.



### Cold versus Flu: What is the difference?

\* NIP: National Immunisation Program

Risk Factors for Flu with <u>Free Flu Vaccine</u> available under NIP*	Signs and symptoms	Influenza "Flu"	Cold
	Symptom onset	Sudden	Gradual
People over 65 years	Fever (i.e. > 38.5° C)	Usual; lasts 3-4 days	Rare
Pregnant Women	Aches (Muscle & Joint)	Usual; often severe	Slight
<b>Medical Conditions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Severe Asthma</li><li>➤ Cystic Fibrosis</li><li>➤ Multiple Sclerosis</li><li>➤ Seizure Disorders</li><li>➤ Heart Disease</li><li>➤ Diabetes</li><li>➤ Renal Failure</li></ul>	Chills	Fairly common	Uncommon
	Fatigue, weakness	Usual	Sometimes
	Sneezing	Sometimes	Common
	Stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common
	Sore throat	Sometimes	Common
	Chest discomfort, cough	Common; can be severe	Mild to moderate; hacking cough
Headache	Common	Rare	

Antibiotics do NOT kill virus, do NOT help a cold get better faster or stop it from getting worse

Cold & Flu Symptoms Management:	Via Medications:
Rest, drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids including hot water with honey	Combination cough and cold medicines which may contains paracetamol, decongestant and/or antihistamine
Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke	Paracetamol or Ibuprofen to help ease pain and fever
Inhale steam to relieve block nose	Decongestants and saline nasal spray for reliving a block nose
Sucking on ice cube or throat lozenge to soothe a sore throat	Anti-inflammatory spray (e.g. Difflam), anaesthetic throat gargles or lozenges to lessen a sore throat

**Cough** is a reflex response to mechanical, inflammatory and chemical irritation of the tracheobronchial tree. It is a normal mechanism for the maintenance of a healthy respiratory system

**Management of a cough should be directed at the underlying cause:**

- An acute cough with sore throat and runny nose is frequently caused by a viral infection.
- If a cough lingers (up to 8 weeks), it could be a post-infective cough.
- Barking or brassy cough may due to croup, un-control asthma may present as nocturnal cough.
- Cough worsening at night or associated with feeding or positioning could be related to reflux.
- Sudden onset of cough, particularly if cough started while eating or, in a child, while playing with small objects could be due to foreign body ingestion.

**Honey** (one teaspoon for child over one) and **menthol-based** rubs may reduce nocturnal cough impact.

Cough suppressant e.g. **Pholcodine** or **antihistamine** can relieve dry cough from allergy/post nasal drip.

**Wet, chesty cough:** Can relief by expectorants (**guaifenesin**) and/or mucolytics (**bromhexine**)

Cough and cold medicines **should Not be given** to children younger than 6 years old. **Ask a doctor or a pharmacist for advice** before giving cough and cold medicines to children **aged 6 to 11 years.**

