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| **Signs and Symptoms** | **Cold** | **Influenza (Flu)** |
| Chest discomfort, cough | Mild to moderate; hacking cough | Common; can be severe |
| Stuffy nose | Common | Sometimes |
| Sore throat | Common | Sometimes |
| Headache | Rare | Common |

Symptoms

At first, the flu may seem like a common cold with a runny nose, sneezing and sore throat. But colds usually develop slowly, whereas the flu tends to come on suddenly. And although a cold can be a bother, you usually feel much worse with the flu.

Common signs and symptoms of the flu include:

* Fever
* Aching muscles
* Chills and sweats
* Headache
* Dry, persistent cough
* Shortness of breath
* Tiredness and weakness
* Runny or stuffy nose
* Sore throat
* Eye pain
* Vomiting and diarrhea, but this is more common in children than adults

**When to see a doctor**

Most people who get the flu can treat themselves at home and often don't need to see a doctor.

If you have flu symptoms and are at risk of complications, see your doctor right away. Taking antiviral drugs may reduce the length of your illness and help prevent more-serious problems.

If you have emergency signs and symptoms of the flu, get medical care right away. For adults, emergency signs and symptoms can include:

* Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
* Chest pain
* Ongoing dizziness
* Seizures
* Worsening of existing medical conditions
* Severe weakness or muscle pain

Emergency signs and symptoms in children can include:

* Difficulty breathing
* Blue lips
* Chest pain
* Dehydration
* Severe muscle pain
* Seizures
* Worsening of existing medical conditions