



Cold and Flu



Student Wellness Centre

student.wellness@usask.ca

wellness.usask.ca

306-966-5768



UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN

What is a Cold?

A cold is a mild infection of the nose and throat (upper respiratory tract). A cold may last a while, but the symptoms remain mild. The cold is caused by a virus that is easily transferred by coughing or sneezing, can travel through the air and then is breathed in by others.

Cold Symptoms	
Fever	Sometimes
Headache	Sometimes
Aches and pains	Sometimes, mild
Tiredness and weakness	Sometimes, mild
Extreme tiredness	Unusual
Runny, stuffy nose	Common
Sneezing	Common
Sore throat	Common
Coughing	Sometimes, mild to moderate
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or earache

How to Treat a Cold

- Stay home and rest. Even if you are not sleeping, relaxing and resting can allow your body to recover more quickly,
- Drink lots of fluids, especially water,
- Soothe a scratchy throat by gargling with warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon per glass) several times per day,
- Eat nutritious foods like soups and fruit, and
- Talk to your health care provider, such as a pharmacist or doctor, about over-the counter drugs that can help and manage your symptoms during the day as well as at nighttime.

What is a Flu?

A flu is not a cold. Seasonal Influenza (flu) is a common infection of the airway and lungs. Like the cold, the flu is caused by a virus that is easily transferred by coughing or sneezing, can travel through the air and then is breathed in by others.

Flu Symptoms	
Fever	Usual, high fever (39-40 °C- 102-104 °F), sudden onset, lasts 3-4 days
Headache	Usual, sometimes severe
Aches and pains	Usual, often severe
Tiredness and weakness	Usual, may last 2-3 weeks or more
Extreme tiredness	Usual, early onset
Runny, stuffy nose	Common
Sneezing	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common
Coughing	Usual, sometimes severe
Complications	Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure, worsen a current chronic respiratory condition, and can be life-threatening

How to Treat a Flu

- A Flu can lead to bronchitis or pneumonia, which can be life-threatening,
- Rest. Stay home and rest, allow your body to more quickly recover. Do not go back to work until you no longer have had a fever for 24 hours, without any fever-reducing medication,
- Drink lots of Fluids, especially water, and
- Talk to your health care provider, such as pharmacist and doctor, about drugs that can help you manage your symptoms.

When to See a Health Care Provider

Get someone you trust to check in on you. This person can bring you food, make a run to the pharmacy, or get you help if needed.

See a health care provider right away if you have:

- Shortness of breath, rapid, or difficulty breathing,
- Chest pain,
- Bluish or grey skin colour,
- Bloody or coloured mucus/spit,
- Sudden dizziness or confusion,
- Severe or persistent vomiting,

- Signs of dehydration (not urinating, dizziness with standing, or dry mouth or eyes),
- Seizures,
- High fever (over 38.5 °C or 101 °F) lasting more than two or three days,
- Low blood pressure, or
- If your symptoms do not get better after a week.

Additional symptoms to watch for in children:

- Not drinking enough fluids or eating,
- Not waking up or interacting, and
- Irritability / not wanting to play or be held.

Did You Know

- Antibiotics do not work on viral infections like colds and flus!
- Children and those over 65 are at high risk of serious complications (like pneumonia) from the flu.
- The annual flu vaccine is the safest, longest lasting, and most effective way to prevent the flu.
- Each year there is a new vaccine to protect against the expected flu virus strains of the coming flu season. Getting the flu vaccine every year maximizes protection as its duration may not span two influenza seasons.
- In Saskatchewan you can call the HealthLine (8-1-1) for professional health advice anytime.

- To learn more about flu symptoms, treatment, and prevention visit www.fightflu.ca.

Over-the-counter Medications

Over-the-counter (OTC) medications can be purchased at a pharmacy without a prescription. OTC medications help to relieve the symptoms of the common cold, but they will not cure you. Make sure you read the labels carefully and know what you are taking! Many OTC medications contain a combination of active ingredients so make sure you are not double dosing.

Pain killers and fever reducers, such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen, will help to ease your aches, sore throat, and to reduce your fever. The use of A.S.A. (acetylsalicylic acid), e.g., Aspirin®, for a fever is not recommended for children, teens, and young adults.

Zinc is the most beneficial to help with your dry irritating cough.

Saline nasal sprays can also open breathing passages and may be used freely.

Decongestants that contain pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine can help your stuffed-up nose, plugged ears, and sinus pressure. Oral medications and nasal sprays are available. Remember, it is important to only use nasal sprays for a few days.

Expectorants that contains guaifenesin, may help the elimination of phlegm that can be associated with a common cold.

Note: If you have any chronic illness such as asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, hyperthyroidism, enlarged prostate, and glaucoma, if you think you could be pregnant, or are taking any drugs (including herbal remedies), speak to the pharmacist first before purchasing any of these medications.

Prevent Getting or Spreading Cold and Flu Viruses

- **Get a flu vaccine** each year for everyone over six months of age.
- **Wash your hands regularly** and thoroughly. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If it is not possible to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer.

- **Sneeze and cough into your arm,** not your hand.
- Keep your hands away from your face.
- Keep common surface areas clean and disinfected. Regularly clean items like doorknobs, remotes, and other items that are used by multiple people.
- Keep your immune system stronger with enough sleep (at least seven hours per night) and healthy eating.
- If you get sick, stay home and limit your contact with others.
- Be a role model to your friends and family. Teach them how they can stop the spread of the cold and flu.
- If you do have a cold or flu (influenza), wear a mask around individuals that are immunocompromised.
- Drink lots of fluids, especially water.

Additional Resources

Visit these great sites:

- flightflu.ca
- immunize.ca
- healthycanadians.gc.ca

wellness.usask.ca