



Common cold

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Abstract

The common cold is a viral upper respiratory tract infection affecting the nose and throat. It is usually harmless, with adults experiencing 2-3 colds per year and children more frequently. Recovery typically occurs within 7-10 days, though symptoms may persist longer in smokers. Medical care is usually unnecessary unless symptoms worsen or persist.

Symptoms

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Congestion
- Sneezing
- Mild headache
- Mild body aches
- Low-grade fever (more common in children)

Causes

Caused by viruses, most commonly rhinoviruses, which spread through airborne droplets or direct contact with contaminated surfaces.

Risk Factors

- Weakened immune system
- Exposure to infected individuals
- Seasonal changes (more common in fall and winter)

- Age (infants and young children are more susceptible)
- Smoking or secondhand smoke exposure

Complications

- Sinus infections
- Ear infections (especially in children)
- Secondary bacterial infections (e.g., strep throat, pneumonia)
- Worsening of asthma or other chronic lung conditions

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is typically based on symptoms. Laboratory tests are rarely needed unless complications are suspected.

Treatment

- Rest and hydration
- Over-the-counter pain relievers (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen)
- Decongestants or saline nasal sprays
- Throat lozenges or cough syrups for symptom relief

Prevention

- Frequent hand washing
- Avoiding close contact with infected individuals
- Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces
- Not sharing utensils or personal items
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle to support immune function

When to See a Doctor

- Symptoms lasting more than 10 days
- Severe or worsening symptoms (e.g., high fever, difficulty breathing)
- Symptoms in infants under 3 months old
- Persistent ear pain or sinus pain

Lifestyle and Home Remedies

- Drinking warm fluids (e.g., tea, broth)
- Using a humidifier to ease congestion
- Gargling salt water for sore throat relief
- Avoiding smoking and secondhand smoke

Medical Recommendations

Most cases resolve with home care. Consult a ****primary care physician**** if symptoms persist beyond 10 days, worsen, or if complications such as high fever or difficulty breathing arise. Antibiotics are not effective for viral infections but may be prescribed for secondary bacterial infections.

References

1. Mayo Clinic Medical References