

what is a cold and  
what causes it ???

Simply put, a “cold” is an upper respiratory viral infection. There are at least 5 different types of viruses that cause the “common cold” (100 different strains). Colds usually last 7 to 14 days. The average adult in the U. S. gets 2-3 colds per year. College students may be more likely to develop colds for the following reasons:

- CLOSE CONTACT WITH OTHERS
- STRESS (academic, relationships, etc.)
- LIFESTYLE (smoking, alcohol, etc.)
- POOR DIETS

### COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COLDS

You cannot catch a cold from a draft, from having wet hair, or from a sudden fluctuation in environmental temperature. Nasal mucus has the highest concentration of cold virus and is easily spread by wiping one’s nose with a hand and then touching objects such as door knobs and telephones or through handshaking. The only way to avoid a cold is to avoid people.

OK, I’m SICK. SO NOW

For most young, healthy adults, colds are a nuisance but don’t usually result in any significant health problems.

I can’t afford to be sick.

Who can?

**REST is very critical for overcoming any infection.**

### Selecting over-the-counter medications

Much confusion abounds about the different over-the-counter cold products. These products are designed to relieve symptoms but they do not “cure” your cold. Listed below are some tips for selecting over-the-counter cold medications:

- To save money, purchase generic brands.
- Avoid all medications during pregnancy. Check with your pharmacist or health care provider.
- Always read the warning labels. It is best to take a medication that targets your particular cold symptoms. Taking combination medication when it is not needed may mean suffering from needless side effects from the medication.

- ◇ **ANTIHISTAMINES:** Help to stop a runny nose. These drugs should be avoided during the congested stage of your cold.
- ◇ **DECONGESTANTS:** Help to relieve sinus pressure, stuffy nose, and clogged ears. Prolonged use may raise your blood pressure.
- ◇ **PAIN RELIEVERS:** Assist in relieving the discomforts of muscle aches, fever, headache, and sore throat. (Examples: acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen.)
- ◇ **COUGH MEDICINES:** Cough suppressants are best for a dry hacking cough. A suppressant calms the cough and allows for restful sleep. Expectorants help bring up thick mucus from the chest for a more productive cough.

### The Cold VS. THE FLU:

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU
<b>Fever</b>	Rare	High (102-104° F) 3 to 4 days
<b>Headache</b>	Rare	Usual, often severe
<b>General aches, pains</b>	Slight	Prominent
<b>Fatigue, weakness</b>	Quite mild	Can last up to 2 to 3 weeks
<b>Extreme exhaustion</b>	Never	Early and prominent
<b>Stuffy nose</b>	Common	Sometimes
<b>Sneezing</b>	Usual	Sometimes
<b>Sore throat</b>	Common	Sometimes
<b>Chest discomfort/cough</b>	Mild to Moderate	Common; can become severe
<b>Complications</b>	Sinus congestion/ Earaches	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can be life threatening
<b>Prevention</b>	None	Annual vaccination**
<b>Treatment</b>	Temporary symptom relief	Amantadine within 24-48 hrs. of onset symptoms

\*\*available at Student Health Service

### HOLISTIC THERAPIES

**Peppermint, Menthol**—can help soothe irritated mucus membranes

**Peppers (Cayenne, Jalapeno)**—have an expectorant effect; can help relieve congestion

**Tea**—black or herbal

**Vitamin C and Vitamin E**

**Zinc**—not proven, but may be helpful

Seek Medical Attention if you have: **TO CONTACT US:**

- a severe sore throat or an extremely red throat
- green or yellow mucus
- temperature over 101°F for more than 48 hours or a severe headache with a fever
- a cough that causes pain or discomfort in the chest
- shortness of breath that is severe
- worsening pain in one or both ears
- no improvement in symptoms within 7 days
- any medical condition like asthma

TO HELP PREVENT COLDS:	
Keep your hands away from your face after exposure to someone who has cold symptoms.	Wash hands frequently with soap and hot water.

- POINTS TO REMEMBER :
- ◇ The symptoms of a cold (sore throat, runny nose, stuffiness, nasal congestion) typically get worse during the first few days and then gradually improve over one to two weeks. Be patient, get adequate rest, and allow your body to heal itself.
  - ◇ Antibiotics do NOT work for colds. Their overuse contributes to the very serious problem of antibacterial resistance.

**Reduce your risk:  
GET A FLU SHOT!!!**  
(available at Student Health Service)

Sources: 1. *Taking Care of Your Cold* (1996). ETR Associates.  
2. Hales, D. (1992). *An Invitation to Health*, 5th edition.  
3. *Chart from National Institute of Health.*

**TO CONTACT US:**

General Information .....(252) 328-6841  
 Appointments.....(252) 328-6841  
 Immunizations.....(252) 328-6841  
 Health Education .....(252) 328-6794  
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**HOURS OF OPERATION:**

**Fall and Spring**

(Effective mid August 2001)

8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., Monday - Thursday  
 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday  
 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Saturday & Sunday, Urgent Care

**Fall and Spring Pharmacy Hours**

8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday  
 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday

**Summer**

(Mid May - Mid August)

7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday - Thursday  
 7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Friday

*After hours emergencies dial 911*

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE  
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Division of Student Life

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