

Cold Treatments

There are many multi-ingredient "sinus" formulas. These products may appear useful because they target a multitude of symptoms, but in reality, most people do not need all these ingredients at the same time. Symptoms should be addressed one by one, using the best product, at the right dose and for the appropriate duration.

Speak to your pharmacist. They are trained to help.



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Common Cold and Flu



Most people do not know the difference between the common cold and the flu, likely because both are respiratory tract infections and have similar symptoms.

While the common cold can be annoying, its symptoms, which include runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, and cough, are harmless. Recommendations include bed rest and drinking plenty of fluids.

Influenza, or the flu, is a much more serious infection. Symptoms include fever, chills, muscle aches, weakness, and headache.



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Fatigue, chest pain and cough often linger for several weeks. Complications include bronchitis and pneumonia.

Causes

Colds and flu are more prevalent in the winter, but temperature is not solely to blame. The increase can also be attributed to more time spent indoors, making it more likely to come into contact with the virus. Also, winter's shorter days and lack of sunlight leads to lower vitamin D levels, which compromises the immune system and decreases ability to fight the virus.

Protection



Use basic hygiene precautions. Viruses are spread by droplets when talking, sneezing, or coughing. Anyone with a cold or the flu should wash their hands frequently and avoid sharing personal items.

Fatigue and overexertion make us more susceptible to illness, but cannot cause us to catch something.

Antibiotics and Vitamin C

Antibiotics are ineffective against viral infections and may be harmful if given to patients with a cold or the flu. Antibiotics are effective against bacterial infections only. Individuals who develop sinus pain or an earache, cough with greenish secretions, or fever lasting more than 4 to 5 days, may have a bacterial infection. Consult a healthcare provider as antibiotics may be required.

Vaccination

There is a vaccine against the flu, but not the common cold. The influenza vaccine (flu shot) is designed to protect against strains considered most likely to pose a threat during the upcoming flu season. It is administered in the fall to lessen symptoms and reduce flu-related complications.

Influenza complications can be serious. Vaccination is recommended for pregnant women, residents of nursing homes or other chronic care facilities, individuals older than 65 years, children aged between 6 months and 5 years, and Indigenous peoples. Individuals with immune compromising conditions, cardiac, pulmonary or renal disorders, cancer, diabetes, anemia, neurologic conditions or morbid obesity, should also be vaccinated.

Vaccination is also recommended for individuals in contact with those at risk of complications and infants younger than 6 months.

Some believe that vitamin C can be used to prevent colds. Studies show that even massive doses of vitamin C cannot prevent colds or flu. It is also unlikely to shorten the duration or severity of infection.