

We often fail to differentiate a cold from the flu. Both are caused by viral infections. The virus is carried through airborne droplets of respiratory fluids that people spread when they sneeze or cough. Objects smeared with the secretions of an infected person (telephone, doorknob, toys, etc.) can also be a source of contamination.

## Avoiding Contamination

- ▶ Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently
- ▶ Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze (teach children to cough into the crook of their arm to avoid spreading the virus to their hands)
- ▶ Use disposable tissues and use them only once
- ▶ Avoid touching your face with your hands
- ▶ Avoid biting your nails
- ▶ Maintain good habits (sleep, diet) and drink plenty of fluids

Vaccination is an effective way to prevent the flu but it has no influence or effectiveness in cold prevention. The vaccine is effective two weeks after the injection. Since the flu virus is different from one year to the next, a booster shot is required every year.

## Symptom Relief

Some over-the-counter medication can relieve or alleviate symptoms. Choose a product that will only treat the symptoms you have. To reduce your risk of adverse reactions, avoid products that combine different drugs. Before purchasing a product, ask your pharmacist to ensure that the medication is suited to your condition. Do not forget that if you have a cold or the flu, you need to get plenty of rest and drink lots of water. At this time, there are no better cures!

### Oral Decongestants

(Phenylephrine and pseudoephedrine)

- ▶ Indication: nasal congestion
- ▶ Possible adverse reactions: headaches, insomnia, increased heartbeat, increased blood pressure
- ▶ Contraindications:
  - Hypertensive individuals or people suffering from heart disease
  - People with diabetes
  - Men suffering from prostate disorders
  - People with closed-angle glaucoma
  - People with thyroid disorders

**Topical Decongestants** – nasal drops or sprays (Phenylephrine, naphazoline, oxymetazoline, xylometazoline)

- ▶ Indication: nasal congestion
- ▶ Possible adverse reactions: burning or tingling sensation
- ▶ Warning: do not use for more than three consecutive days to avoid risk of dependence or rebound congestion (congestion caused by the prolonged use of the medication)
- ▶ Sharing a dispenser with another person can spread the infection.

## Cough Suppressants

Dextromethorphan (DM)

- ▶ Indication: dry cough
- ▶ Possible adverse reactions: normally well tolerated
- ▶ Contraindications: Individuals who take prescription medication should consult their pharmacist to prevent drug interactions

Chlophedianol (Ulonge™)

- ▶ Indication: dry cough
- ▶ Possible adverse reactions: normally well tolerated
- ▶ Contraindications: contraindicated in pregnant women and children less than 2 years of age.

Codeine

- ▶ Indication: severe dry cough
- ▶ Possible adverse reactions: drowsiness and dependence
- ▶ Contraindications: Individuals who take prescription medication should consult their pharmacist to prevent drug interactions.

**Expectorants** (Guaifenesine)

- ▶ Indication: loose cough with expectoration
- ▶ Possible adverse reactions: normally well tolerated
- ▶ Caution: controversial effectiveness. Drink plenty of water and use a cold-vapour humidifier.

**Fever Medication** (Antipyretics)

- ▶ Acetaminophen: 1<sup>st</sup> choice for adults and children
- ▶ Acetylsalicylic acid (A.S.A.): do not administer to children under 18 years of age
- ▶ Ibuprofen: provides long-lasting relief
- ▶ Indication: fever > 38.5°C (101°F), muscle pains, headaches
- ▶ **Caution:** for children, the dosage is calculated according to weight, not age. Consult your pharmacist regularly for proper dosage if your child's weight fluctuates. Some fever medication are contraindicated in the presence of certain disorders. Consult your pharmacist.

## Consulting a Physician

If symptoms persist for more than a week, and fever for more than four days, or if secretions are greenish, do not hesitate to consult a physician.

## Natural Health Products

**Vitamin C:** Does not prevent or reduce the duration or the symptoms.

**Echinacea:** Controversial effectiveness. If taken from the onset of symptoms, it can alleviate them. Ineffective as a preventive method and cannot be taken for more than ten consecutive days to preserve its effectiveness. Avoid using it if suffering from asthma, allergies or urticaria, or autoimmune diseases (immune system deficiencies).

**Zinc:** Controversial effectiveness. It may reduce the duration of cold symptoms, if taken from their onset.

Consult your pharmacist or physician to find the treatment that is right for you, in accordance to your needs and health condition, as well as contraindications and possible side effects.



We often fail to differentiate a cold from the flu. Below is a list of symptoms that distinguish them.

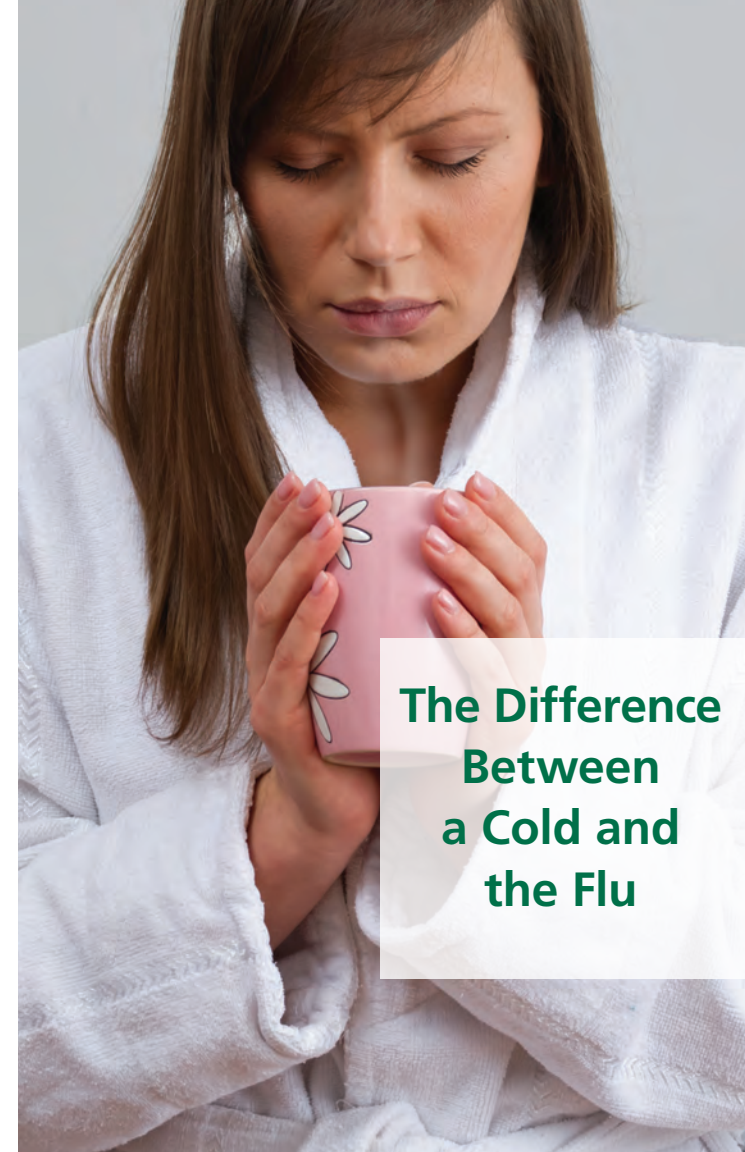
FLU (OR INFLUENZA)	COLD
Muscle soreness	Sneezing
Joint aches and pains	Sore throat
Intense fatigue that persists for 2 to 3 weeks	Tingling
Shivers	Tearing
Fever: 39 to 40°C (102 to 104°F)	Moderate to nonexistent fever (38°C/100°F)
Severe headaches	Headaches
Dry, painful cough	Coughing
Duration: 7 days	Duration: 7 to 10 days

For more health information, please visit [www.guardian-pharmacy.ca](http://www.guardian-pharmacy.ca)

The information contained in this pamphlet should not be used as a substitute for medical care. Always seek the advice of your doctor before starting any treatment.

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# Cold and Flu



The Difference Between a Cold and the Flu

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