

## Top 10 Home Cold and Flu Remedies

Not just during the winter, but at any time of year you can suffer from the cold virus. It can slow you down depending on which symptoms you exhibit. The same goes for the flu although it can be a bit more insidious than the cold. Even when you feel as sick as a dog, consider home remedies first before reaching for any type of medication.



### Fighting Back

In case you didn't know the cold and also the flu are caused by viruses. Unlike bacterial infections, viral infections have no known cure. The best that we can do is to alleviate the symptoms that result from the infection. Reducing the effect of the symptoms can reduce the duration of the virus in many cases.

Colds and the flu may strike any age group and any gender equally. If you inhabit certain groups such as the elderly, infants, immune-compromised individuals or those with autoimmune diseases, you are at higher risk for complications especially from the flu. Receiving the vaccine is highly recommended for you as a first line of defense for your health.

### How do I know if I have a Cold?

The common cold is most often caused by a form of the rhinovirus (10-40%). Other sources include corona viruses and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus). Rhinoviruses can strike at any time of year and last for several weeks. As busy people, we often ignore the beginning signs of a cold in order to get on with our lives. But, eventually the symptoms will compound and then we'll get hit with a whammy that will knock us off our feet.



For anyone suffering from a virus, especially one like the cold with so many strains, recognizing the symptoms can lead to a shorter bout with the common cold. What are the symptoms? You may know them already, but just to reiterate, they include but are not limited to:

- Sneezing
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Nasal drainage (clear, yellow or green denotes a sinus infection may be involved)
- Chest congestion
- Headache

- Nasal congestion

There is usually no fever associated with a cold. That can often be the dividing line between a cold and something more serious like the flu or a bacterial infection like a sinus infection. Colds typically last about a week, but can drag on if symptoms are ignored or you have a lower than normal immune system.

### How do I know if I have the Flu?

The flu is caused by the influenza virus. It is extremely contagious and attacks the respiratory system. It is often caused by the influenza A or B virus but there are many strains. Scientists try to predict the most obvious strains that will develop each year and account for them in the vaccine.

The flu is more dangerous than the cold for the groups of people we discussed earlier. The flu vaccine is the first step, but also knowing the signs and symptoms of the condition can lead to earlier treatment. In some cases, the flu can lead to life-threatening pneumonia. The symptoms of the flu include, but are not limited to:

- Chest congestion
- Sore throat
- Sneezing,
- headache
- coughing
- fatigue
- muscle aches and pains
- weakness
- fever

### Top 10 Home Cold and Flu Remedies

Since the flu exhibits more severe forms of mostly the same symptoms, many home remedies can work for both. At the first sign of trouble, use your remedies. If symptoms get worse over time, consult a doctor to see if something more serious is going on like additional complications.

1. **Drink plenty of fluids** – Staying hydrated is the single most important thing you can do with a cold or the flu. Dehydration can make your situation more dangerous. Fluids, especially hot ones, can thin the mucus layer helping to break it up. Coughs become more productive.



2. **Salt water** – Homemade saline nasal washes thin the mucus in your nasal passages as well as keeps the respiratory passages moist. The salt helps wash out any pathogens. You can also gargle with it to alleviate the inflammation of a sore throat.



3. **Steam** – Steam can help alleviate stuffiness and congestion especially at night when it can get hard to sleep. You can boil water and then place a towel over your head to breathe in the steam. Another option is to inhale the steam from a hot shower. Add fresh ginger, eucalyptus or menthol to the water and breathe deep. Try a humidifier as well.



4. **Blow your nose correctly** – Pressure can build up in your head if you try to clear both nostrils at once and blow germy phlegm into the ear passages leading to an earache. Close one nostril and blow out the mucus. Repeat for the other nostril.



5. **Rest** – It doesn't sound like much but you'd be surprised how many people keep working when they are ill and only get worse. Rest gives the body a chance to repair itself and boost the immune system.



6. **Chicken soup** – Whether it's your grandmother's recipe or from a can, it works. It has anti-inflammatory properties that can boost your immunity, soothe a sore throat and help thin nasal secretions.



7. **Try supplements** – Supplements like zinc or Echinacea might help.

Echinacea is an herbaceous plant believed to have immune boosting qualities. Interestingly enough in recent years, studies have shown that zinc not only helped people fight off colds, but may actually prevent them as well.



8. **Gargle** – If you suffer from a sore throat through it all, gargle with warm water and sage, turmeric or salt water. Gargling with raspberry leaf tea can also help reduce a fever.



9. **Hot water bottles and compresses** – Use hot water bottles and warm compresses to ease the pain of stuffiness in cheeks and sinuses.



10. **Elevate your head** – Use pillows or a bed wedge to allow mucus to drain and relieve pressure in nasal passages.



Colds and flu are caused by a virus, which means that treatment is for the symptoms not the actual condition. Home remedies can help reduce the duration and intensity of many symptoms associated with both.



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