

# The Common Cold

## What is it?

An upper respiratory infection, also called the common cold, is referred to as such because it is one of the most common ailments, the cause of more doctor visits and more days of missed school and work than any other ailment. Among the more than 200 viruses that cause the inflammation of the nose and throat, the most common is the rhinovirus. "Cold season" runs with the traditional school year, beginning in early September and ending when weather warms, in early spring.

## Symptoms

Symptoms of the cold vary from patient to patient, but can include a combination of the following:

- ✓ Discharge from the nose and/or sneezing
- ✓ A sore or scratchy, irritated throat and/or mild hacking cough
- ✓ Watery eyes
- ✓ Mild fatigue
- ✓ Low-grade fever and/or chills
- ✓ Mild muscle ache and/or headache

Note that the common cold is a completely different ailment than influenza ("the flu"). Cold and flu symptoms may often be similar, but there are some differences:

| Cold                             | Flu                                      |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Low-grade fever                  | High fever                               |
| Mild cough                       | Persistent, worsening cough              |
| Mild fatigue                     | Extreme fatigue                          |
| Mild muscle ache and/or headache | Often severe muscle ache and/or headache |

## Diagnosis

Because the symptoms of the common cold often mimic other ailments, such the flu or a bacterial infection, it is important to consult your physician for a diagnosis. A cold diagnosis is most often based on an analysis of the patient's symptoms, so it's important to describe your symptoms and their severity accurately.

### Brought to you by the caring physicians at:

Rochester Medical Group  
3950 S. Rochester Road, Suite 1200  
Rochester Hills, MI 48307  
Phone (248) 844-6000



**Did you know?** Children catch colds far more often than adults — on average 6 to 10 times a year. That's more than twice as often as adults, who only catch 2 to 4 colds each year.

## Treatments

There is no cure for the common cold, but there are treatments that can alleviate some of the symptoms. Recommended treatments include:

- ✓ Drinking plenty of clear fluids
- ✓ Smoking cessation (for adults) or limiting exposure to second-hand smoke (for children)
- ✓ Saline nose drops and/or a cool mist humidifier
- ✓ Acetaminophen for aches and pains (DO NOT give aspirin to a child with a fever, as this may cause Reyes syndrome)

Antibiotics will **NOT** cure a cold, or make it go away faster, so your physician will not prescribe them to treat a cold.

Please also note that in 2007, the Food and Drug Administration proposed a ban on over-the-counter cold medications for children under the age of 6.

## Helpful Hints

- ✓ To prevent the spread of a cold virus, please stay home if you are sick, and keep your child home from school or day-care if he or she is sick.
- ✓ To prevent catching a cold, wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, and teach your children to do the same.
- ✓ If there is a change in your symptoms, please let your physician know right away. For some pediatric patients, a cold can lead to other ailments, such as an ear, sinus, or throat infection.