

Conquering a Cold Takes Time (and Soup)

The name notwithstanding, you usually don't catch a cold simply by spending too much time in the wintery weather. Rather, the common cold is caused by a variety of viruses, which can be transmitted either by airborne droplets or by direct contact with contaminated objects.

Because of the sheer number of viruses lurking about, no person can develop complete immunity from colds, and no vaccine is available. Bottom line, if you're a living, breathing human being, you're going to have at least one cold this year... and probably more, depending on your age. Infants and young children are particularly susceptible.

Colds typically last about a week to 10 days. Symptoms include cough, headache, sore throat, nasal congestion, runny nose, and sneezing. You may also experience a mild fever, but if your temperature reaches higher than 101 degrees, you may actually have the flu – in which case you should probably pay a visit to your family doctor.

Even though there is no known cure for a cold, that doesn't mean you can't take steps to hasten its departure. Stick to such tried-and-true remedies as bed rest, fluids and chicken soup. Avoid antibiotics – they don't work against viruses. And while lozenges and cough syrup may help relieve symptoms, they do nothing to shorten a cold's duration. Your best bet is to get some sleep and help your body beat the bug!



To Lower Your Cold Risk, Get Defensive

While you can't avoid colds completely, you can use these tips to reduce their frequency.

- Avoid contact with infected individuals.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. This can destroy viruses acquired from touching contaminated surfaces.
- Disinfect potentially infected surfaces or personal objects.
- Don't share towels and other personal belongings.
- Avoid sharing utensils if someone in the family has a cold.
- Encourage individuals to cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Lifestyle modifications, such as smoking cessation and stress management, may lower your susceptibility.

SOURCES: MedicineNet.com, WebMD, Wikipedia