

FIGHTING THE COLD AND FLU



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WHAT CAUSES THE COLD OR FLU??

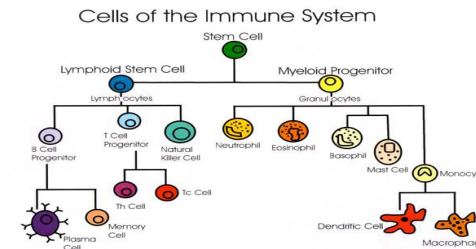
Common colds and flues are caused by a virus. These include:



- Rhinovirus
- Adenovirus
- Influenza virus
- Parainfluenza virus

We get cold symptoms because it is how our bodies respond to an infection.

The immune system contains inflammatory mediators and they are supposed to protect the body from infections.




When a cell becomes infected with the cold/flu virus, the inflammatory mediators become activated.

This causes mucus gland secretions, sneezing, coughing and dilation of blood vessels leading to the symptoms of a cold/ flu.



SYMPTOMS OF A COLD OR FLU

- ▶ Sore throat (this is usually the first symptom)
- ▶ Runny nose (clear or yellow secretions)
- ▶ Sneezing
- ▶ Nasal congestion
- ▶ A low grade fever (37.8) 
- ▶ Watery eyes
- ▶ Fatigue and aches
- ▶ A cough which can be either
 - Productive (wet or "chesty") which produces mucus or
 - Non productive (dry or "hacking") and less likely to produce mucus
- ▶ Symptoms usually last for 7-10 days

There is
NO CURE FOR
the COLD or FLU

Treatment lies in reducing the existing symptoms.

WAYS TO MANAGE TO COLD AND FLUS

- ▶ Get plenty rest
- ▶ Inhale moist air by humidifiers to reduce congestion.



- ▶ The use of Vitamin C may boost your immune system.

- ▶ Drink plenty fluids (about 8 glasses of water a day)
- ▶ Use of lozenges for sore throats
- ▶ Use of saline drops or sprays to sooth mucus membranes
- ▶ Elevate your head with extra pillows at night to ease a dry cough.
- ▶ Quit smoking and do not use other forms of tobacco especially while you have a cough
- ▶ Using Over the Counter (OTC) medications. These may not shorten the length of a cold but they may ease your symptoms.



WAYS TO MANAGE TO COLD AND FLUS



“Cough and Cold” medications are usually the most helpful since they include:

- ▶ **Decongestants** (to reduce nasal congestion e.g. pseudoephedrine)
- ▶ **Antihistamine** (for sneezing and runny nose and is usually used in drowsy medications)
- ▶ **Analgesics** (to reduce pains and aches, sore throats, fever such as acetaminophen)



- ▶ **Cough suppressants** for non productive coughs (for reducing severity of the cough such as dextromethophan)
- ▶ **Expectorants** for productive coughs (to help loosen the mucus such as guaifenisen)
- ▶ **Mucolytics** for productive coughs (they loosen and thin mucus secretions such as bromhexine)

COMBINATION PRODUCTS

There are cold/cough combination products which contain more than one ingredient. E.g. some products may contain an antihistamine, decongestant and an analgesic and it may also have a cough suppressant.

It is important that a product is selected which is best for your symptoms. You should speak to your pharmacist if you have problems choosing which product is best for you.



WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

- ▶ Sore throat that persists more than several days.
- ▶ Persistent fever, headache, nausea and vomiting.
- ▶ A cough that does not get better within 7– 10 days.
- ▶ Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, chest pain or wheezing.
- ▶ Thick nasal discharge.
- ▶ Fever more than 38 degrees Celsius for more than 48 hrs.

PREVENTING THE COLD AND FLU

- ▶ Washing of hands regularly 
- ▶ Keeping hands away from eyes, nose and mouth
- ▶ Keeping immune system strong (e.g. use of vitamin C)
- ▶ Healthy diet 
- ▶ Exercise regularly
- ▶ Use of hand sanitizers since they kill germs



You can also get a flu vaccine to prevent seasonal influenza. Within two weeks of getting a flu vaccine, antibodies develop in the body and provide protection against flu.

Come in or contact us at UWI Pharmacy for more information about the flu vaccine !!