

# What's the Difference Between Influenza and the Common Cold?

Colds and influenza (flu) are both highly contagious respiratory diseases caused by viruses and are typically seen in the colder months. Because they have similar symptoms it can be difficult to tell the difference. Cold symptoms tend to be milder than flu symptoms. The chart below lists some of the common symptoms and shows the differences between these two common illnesses.

Symptom	Influenza	Common Cold
<b>Fever</b>	Usually sudden onset; temperature often 102-104°F; lasts 2-4 days	Rare in adults and older children
<b>Cough</b>	Common; non-productive, but can be severe	Common; hacking; can be productive or non-productive
<b>Headache</b>	Common	Rare
<b>Sore Throat</b>	Common	Common
<b>Watery eyes</b>	Rare	Common
<b>Fatigue</b>	Common; can be severe	Occasional; usually mild
<b>Muscle aches</b>	Common	Rare
<b>Sneezing</b>	Rare	Common
<b>Runny, stuffy nose</b>	Rare	Common
<b>Breathing problems</b>	Sometimes	Rare
<b>Complications</b>	Pneumonia, respiratory failure, encephalitis, eye infections	Earache, congestion; sinusitis
<b>Deaths</b>	Occasional	None reported
<b>Treatment</b>	Antivirals may be useful if begun within 48 hours of onset of symptoms	Symptomatic
<b>Prevention</b>	Influenza vaccine; frequent hand washing; cover your cough	Frequent hand washing; cover your cough