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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Got a Flu or a Cold?

Both "influenza" and the "common cold" are **viral respiratory infections** (they affect the nose, throat, and lungs). Viruses are spread from person to person through airborne droplets that are sneezed out or coughed up by an infected person. In some cases, the viruses can be spread when a person touches an infected surface (e.g., doorknobs, countertops, telephones) and then touches his or her nose, mouth, or eyes. As such, these illnesses are most easily spread in crowded conditions such as schools. Washing your hands regularly is the best prevention.

"Influenza virus" infections are commonly referred to as "the flu". Between October and March each year, between 10% and 40% of people are stricken with the influenza virus. Although most people recover fully, the flu causes approximately 7,000 deaths annually in Canada, mostly among high-risk populations (people with other medical conditions or weakened immune systems, the elderly, or very young children). There are three types of influenza viruses: A, B, and C. Type A influenza causes the most serious problems in humans.

There are over 200 different known cold viruses, but most colds (30-40%) are caused by "rhinoviruses". In Canada, the peak times for colds are at the start of school in the fall, in mid-winter, and again in early spring. Children catch approximately eight colds per year; adults catch roughly four per year, and seniors about two per year. Many people confuse the flu with a bad cold. The following table highlights the differences in symptoms between an influenza virus infection and the common cold (rhinovirus infection):

A fever is uncommon in a cold and usually present (up to a high of 38 to 41degrees Celsius) in the flu.

A headache is uncommon in a cold and very common in the flu.

Bodily aches and pains are often slight in a cold and common and often severe in the flu.

Fatigue and weakness is mild in a cold, while it can last for up to 14-21 days in the flu.

Extreme exhaustion occurs almost never in a cold and is very common at the start of the flu.

Stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat is common in a cold and occurs sometimes in the flu.

Chest discomfort and cough can be mild to moderate (hacking cough) in a cold and is common in the flu.

People infected with an influenza or cold virus become contagious 24 hours after the virus enters the body (often before symptoms appear). Adults remain infectious (can spread the virus to others) for about 6 days, and children remain infectious for up to 10 days.

If you are unlucky enough to get the flu or a cold, it is likely caused by a **virus, not a bacterial infection!** Therefore, don't try to intimidate your medical doctor into giving you a prescription for antibiotics. They will not work on viral infections, only on bacterial infections. With viral infections, you pretty much have to rest and "ride it out" until your body is able to eliminate the infection on its own.

The best way to fight off a flu is to not get it in the first place! If you eat properly, exercise, don't smoke, see your chiropractor to keep your nervous system (which controls your immune system) healthy, and most importantly wash your hands, you should be able to avoid experiencing the full symptoms of the common flu.