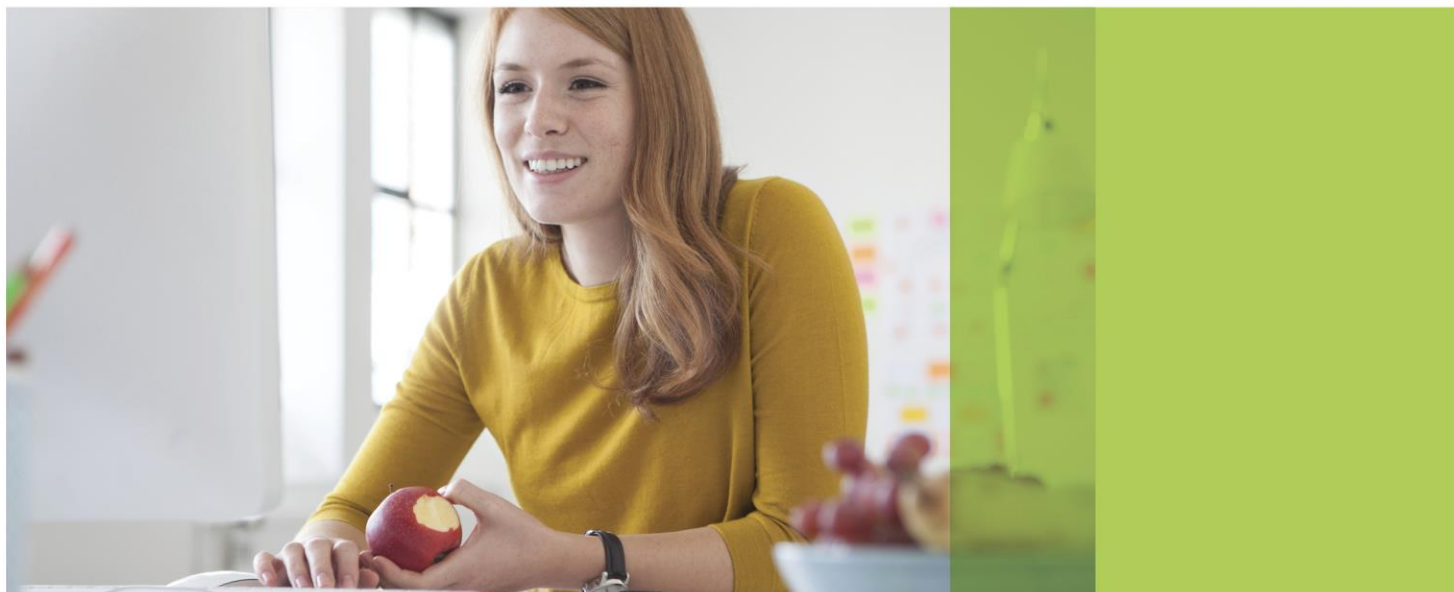


Five common questions about cold and flu season



There are many misconceptions about avoiding colds and the flu, how the germs are spread, and treatment. Here are five common questions people ask:

Question 1: Can you get the flu from the flu vaccination?

No. The World Health Organization suggests that the flu vaccination may be one of the most effective defenses against catching the flu.¹ The vaccine itself is made from an inactivated virus that can't transmit the infection.² The myth may have developed because people can still get sick after vaccination (until the vaccine takes effect, which can take up to a week or even two). So be careful around people who are sick during that time. If you live in a geographical area where your risks for getting the flu are very low, talk to your healthcare provider to determine if the flu vaccination is right for you.

Question 2: Should I take antibiotics for a cold or flu?

No. Antibiotics are only useful in fighting bacteria, and both the cold and flu are infections from viruses.³ Sometimes, colds can lead to a bacterial infection in your lungs, sinuses, or ears.³ If that happens, your healthcare provider may prescribe antibiotics, but only at the time that a bacterial infection is suspected.

Question 3: Can someone who has no symptoms infect me?

Yes. Most healthy adults can spread the flu virus to others a day before their symptoms develop and up to seven days after becoming sick.⁴

Question 4: What medicine or remedy will cure a cold or flu?

There is no cure for a cold or the flu. Both have to run their course.³ There are certain prescription medications, called antiviral drugs, that can lessen fever and flu symptoms, and shorten the time you are sick. Most medicines or remedies you try would be to relieve the symptoms of the infection to help you feel better. However, it's extremely important to remember that even if you take something that makes you feel less congested or reduces your fever, you're still contagious to other people.

Questions 5: Can I really get the flu or a cold from the germs on a door handle or cell phone?

Yes. Both cold and flu viruses can live outside the body.¹ They can survive for periods of time on non-porous surfaces, like desks, keyboards, and countertops, and even porous surfaces, like tissues, clothing, and towels.¹ The amount of time varies, depending on a number of factors. That's why it's important to wipe down common surfaces at work and wash your hands frequently.

1. World Health Organization, "Influenza (Seasonal): Fact sheet," November 2018
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Key facts about seasonal flu vaccine," September 2020
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Antibiotics aren't always the answer," March 2020
4. American Lung Association, "Flu symptoms, causes, and risk factors," May 2020

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