

Common Cold



Overview

We've all experienced the sneezing, coughing, sore throat and fever of a common cold. But what, exactly, is a cold? And how do you fight it?

Causes

"Common cold" is the name we give to a generally harmless infection that's most often caused by a virus. There are hundreds of viruses that cause colds, but rhinoviruses cause most of them. The viruses that cause colds spread through the air in droplets from sneezes and coughs. They can be on surfaces you touch. Viruses enter your body through your eyes, nose or mouth.

Symptoms

A cold can leave you feeling generally unwell. Your nose may be runny or stuffy, and you may sneeze. You may have a cough and a sore throat. You may have congestion. It's common to have a mild fever, headache and body aches, too.

Treatment

There is no cure for a cold. Antibiotics aren't effective, because antibiotics only kill bacteria, not viruses. Most colds last for about a week to ten days. During that time, you can use over-the-counter remedies to help with your symptoms. Drink fluids and get plenty of rest. For more tips, talk to your doctor.

