

Do I have a

# COLD

— or —

# FLU?



**Cold Symptoms** usually begin with a runny nose and a sore throat, which usually go away after a day or two. The nasal symptoms continue and congestion is soon to follow. With a cold we typically develop a cough by the fourth and fifth days. Fever is uncommon in adults, but a slight fever is possible. Children are more likely to have a fever with a cold. Adults that have higher fevers should seek a doctor immediately because this would indicate a more serious infection or possibly the flu.

Unfortunately, with cold symptoms, we are sure to have watery nasal secretions for the first few days. This is very annoying and causes us to have to wipe or blow our nose often. Later, these secretions become thicker and darker. Dark mucus is natural and does not usually mean you have developed a bacterial infection, such as a sinus infection.

There are several hundreds of different viruses that may cause your cold symptoms. Cold symptoms usually last for about a week. During the first three days that you have cold symptoms, you are contagious. This means you can pass the cold to others, so stay home and get some much-needed rest. If cold symptoms do not seem to be improving after a week, you may have a bacterial infection, which means you may need antibiotics.

**Flu symptoms** are usually more severe than cold symptoms and come on quickly. Symptoms of the flu can include sore throat, fever, headache, muscle aches, congestion, and cough. More severe cases of the flu can include vomiting and diarrhea.

Most flu symptoms gradually improve over two to five days, but it is not uncommon to feel weak or tired for a week or more. The young, elderly, or people with lung or heart problems may experience a common complication of the flu, which is pneumonia. Pneumonia can lead to hospitalization so this is why it is very important for our youth and elderly to protect themselves from the flu.

As mentioned before, viruses enter our bodies through the mucous membranes of the nose, eyes, or mouth. Therefore, it is possible to contract the flu virus or a cold every time you touch your uncleansed hand to one of these areas. You may be your own worst enemy because you could be infecting yourself with a virus, which makes it very important to keep hands germ-free with frequent washing. ♦