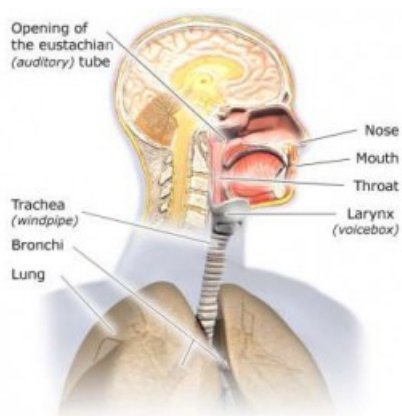


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INDEPENDENT, OBJECTIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED

How can you tell whether you have the flu?



People often use the terms “cold” and “flu” interchangeably. However, they are two different illnesses which progress very differently and have different consequences. You can normally tell whether you have a cold or the flu by observing the signs and symptoms.

Colds are far more common than the flu. You are more likely to have a cold or another upper airway infection if:

- the illness developed gradually,
- you do not have an achy body,
- it is outside the flu season or nobody around you has the flu,
- you do not have any serious chest complaints, and
- you still feel like eating.

The flu (influenza) typically affects your whole body rather than just your airways. The symptoms tend to arise very suddenly and be very strong. Typical flu symptoms include:

- a fever: Your body temperature rises to 38 to 40 degrees centigrade or more,
- aches and pains in the muscles and joints throughout your body (“myalgia” and “arthralgia”),
- headaches,
- feeling exhausted and generally very ill,
- a dry cough without phlegm,
- a stuffy and / or runny nose (“rhinitis”),
- a lack of appetite, and
- extreme tiredness.

Babies or toddlers might have gastro-intestinal symptoms too, like feeling sick and vomiting.

It is advisable to consult a doctor if you think that you or someone you know has the flu. This is especially important if you already have another illness, such as a chronic lung disease or diabetes, which increases the likelihood that your flu will lead to complications. The same is true if you are in close contact with people who are at higher risk, including babies and toddlers.

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Glossary

infection

In medicine, we speak of an infection when a person has caught a germ (an infectious agent). This germ can be a bacterium, a virus, a fungus or a worm. The germ multiplies and then either spreads throughout the body or only attacks one particular organ. As long as there are no signs of a disease, this is called an asymptomatic infection. When the body shows a reaction to the germ in the form of symptoms, this is called a symptomatic infection (an infectious disease). The period between the moment the germs enter the body and the moment the first symptoms of the disease appear, is called the incubation period. It may last a few hours or days, or even many years. An infection does not necessarily have to lead to the onset of a disease.

Sources

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG)

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG) was established by legislation to provide evaluations of the effectiveness, quality and efficiency of healthcare services. This includes the assessment of medicines as well as the publication of health information for consumers and patients.

Evidence basis of our health information

Our information is based primarily on systematic reviews of the effects of health care. Systematic reviews are necessary to gain an objective picture of health care. In order to do this, a clear question is formulated. Researchers then find all the relevant studies that could answer this question. They then evaluate those studies.

You can find a list of the evidence and other scientific literature on which this information is based at **www.informedhealthonline.org**

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