

Is it a Cold, the Flu or Allergies? Do You Know the Difference?

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There is often confusion between the symptoms of the common cold, the seasonal flu and allergies. For the purpose of this article we will explain the difference in each illness so that you become more in tuned with your body.

For those of you who have brought into this fear mongering about the Swine Flu, we want to clear up some facts for you. Prevention is the key! The goal is to boost your immune system so you want come down with any type of illness period.

We know that the pharmaceutical industry is big business and the makers of the Swine Flu aka H1N1 vaccines is about to make a killing on its production.

Because more than 200 different individual strains of virus can cause colds and flu, and strains for these viruses are constantly changing, vaccinations have been only partly successful in preventing outbreaks. Therefore, if you have a strong immune system then you should not take any type of flu shot especially the Swine Flu shot. Even with a weak system I would not take this shot!

The immune system helps us fight infections by identifying foreign invaders and mobilizing the body's white blood cells to fight them. For a weak immune system, you can boost your immune system by reading the "*Top 20 Steps to Boost Your Immune System*" (<http://www.howtotakecontrol.com/ImmuneSystem.html>).

The Common Cold

Cold season is August – April. Colds last for about a week to ten days, on average.

Most colds clear up on their own but occasionally a cold can turn into a more serious illness such as bronchitis, a middle ear infection, or sinus infection. Anyone who has frequent colds or bouts with the flu should have their thyroid checked.

A cold occur 18 to 24 hours after the virus enters the body. A common cold is an infection of the upper respiratory tract caused by a virus. Cold weather does not cause a cold, however, most colds occur in the fall or winter. This is because most cold viruses thrive better in colder climates. The symptoms include head congestion, nasal congestion, sore throat, coughing, headache, sneezing, and watery eyes. Children may develop a low-grade fever but this is rare in adults.

It is estimated that healthy adults get an average of two colds per year. If you get more than two colds a year then it's a good chance you have a weak immune system. Children usually get many more because of their immature immune system.

Take Vitamin C and Zinc throat lozenges at the first sign of a sore throat or stuffiness in the head or nose. This can stop the duration of the cold and maybe even stop it altogether.

Remain as active as possible! Staying in bed for ordinary stifies is not only unnecessary but it will probably make you feel worse. Moving around and exercising will help loosen up mucus and other fluids so stay active.

Cold viruses can survive for several hours on hands, tissues, or hard surfaces so wash your hands often, flush facial tissues so you don't reinfect yourself and wash off surfaces. Try not to spread the cold or flu to others that you come in contact with.

Since there is no cure for the common cold, the key is prevention because once a cold gets a hold on you it might be hard to stop it.

The Seasonal Flu

Influenza, better known as the Flu, occurs in the winter time. The flu lasts up to twelve days or more, followed by a week or more of coughing and fatigue.

Having the flu is by far the more serious condition than having a cold or allergy. It can lead to life-threatening complications especially in older or frail people.

The flu is a highly contagious viral infection of the upper respiratory tract. There are two types of influenza viruses, designated type A and type B, that causes this acute infection of the throat, nose, bronchial tubes, lungs, and middle ear.

The virus enters the body's airways through mucous membranes in the nose, eyes, or mouth. Because the illness can be spread easily by coughing and sneezing, flu epidemics are common, especially in the winter. During an epidemic, 25 to 50% of the population can be affected. The flu is unpredictable and can strike anyone at any age.

The symptoms of the seasonal flu begin much like those of the common cold such as body aches, cough, fatigue, headache, and hot and cold sweats. In many cases a fever develops, and you may feel hot one moment and cold the next.

Most flu sufferers have a dry throat and cough. Nausea and vomiting may occur as well. Often, a person with the flu is so weak and so uncomfortable that he or she does not feel like eating or doing anything else.

Flu is rarely dangerous to healthy adults but it can make people susceptible to pneumonia, ear infections, and sinus trouble. High risk groups are those at any age with a weakened immune system.

If you catch the flu consume plenty of fluids, especially fresh juices, herbal teas, soups, and quality water, to prevent dehydration and help flush out the body. To shorten the

lengths of the flu go on a liquid diet with hot herbal teas and hot broth for one or two days. Try to get sleep and rest as much as possible when you come down with the flu.

Allergies

Allergy season is March – September. Allergies can cause symptoms that mimic those of colds and flu. Allergies especially seasonal allergies can linger miserably for weeks or even months.

Hay Fever is the most common type of seasonal allergy. Allergy symptoms most resemble those of the common cold, but there are some differences. The nasal discharge caused by a cold is generally watery at the very beginning, but then turns thick and yellow, while allergies produces a consistently thin and clear discharge from the nose, in addition to itchy eyes, mouth, and skin.

While it's difficult to recognize the cause of a common cold, in many cases it's easy to recognize an allergy. If both parents have an allergy then it is a seven out of ten chance that children will also have the allergy. Emotional stress can also cause you to be susceptible to allergies.

Typical allergic responses are nasal congestion, coughing, wheezing, itching, shortness of breath, headache, fatigue, and hives and other skin rashes. Substances that provoke allergic responses are called allergens. Most common allergens are pollen, dust, certain metals, some cosmetics, lanolin, dust mites, animal hair, insect bites, poison oak or ivy, some common drugs (penicillin and aspirin), some food additives, animal dander, and chemicals found in soap, washing powder, cleaning supplies, and many other chemicals. Cutting grass, harvesting crops, or walking through tall vegetation can provoke an allergic reaction.

For people with asthma, having allergies can be “life threatening.” A severe reaction called “anaphylactic shock” will swell the larynx, obstruct the airway, and may be fatal. This is an emergency situation and remedied by an injection of adrenalin.

Foods can provide allergic reactions. Some of the most allergenic foods are chocolate, dairy products especially cow's milk, soy, eggs, shellfish, strawberries, wheat, peanuts, etc. Excessive protein in the diet can increase the severity of your symptoms by causing the immune system to overreact. Rotating foods and eating a wide variety minimizes exposure to food allergens.

Some reactions to different foods begin as soon as you starting chewing. If you start a child on solid foods too soon it can cause them to develop a “food allergy.”

Allergies can affect your quality of life and production at work and can also lead to secondary illnesses such as ear and sinus infections.

A test to see if you have a food allergy consists of taking your pulse rate after eating a certain food. A normal pulse reading is between 52 to 70 beats per minutes. You can wait 20 minutes to see if your pulse rate rises to more than 10 beats. If it does, you need to discontinue eating that food because you are allergic to it.

Skin and blood tests may be required to find the source of an allergy. For chronic hives, check with a physician to see that the thyroid is functioning properly. Thyroid hormone replacement may be necessary. Vitamin C is a natural antihistamine. For hives and itching, oatmeal or cornstarch added to the bath can relieve symptoms.

If you constantly suffer from a cold, flu or allergies, hopefully, now you can pinpoint the difference and take the proper steps to restore your health. Also read the *“Top 12 Steps To Become Healthier Over the Next 30 Days”* (<http://www.howtotakecontrol.com/series3.html>).

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