

When to Seek Treatment for Cold Symptoms



The common cold can have similar symptoms to the flu, COVID-19, and other respiratory illnesses. While the cold can cause an upper respiratory infection (URI), URIs may include other causes such as strep, flu, sinus infection, bronchitis, or pneumonia. It's important to rule these causes out when you think you may have a cold.

If you see a doctor for your cold, you might expect to be prescribed antibiotics. **However, antibiotics do not help against viruses that cause the cold.** Most respiratory tract infections (RTIs) improve without special treatment.

Call your doctor or see a medical professional if you start experiencing any of the following symptoms¹:



- Trouble breathing or fast breathing
- Dehydration or have little to no urine output
- Fever that lasts longer than four days
- Symptoms that last more than 10 days without any improvement
- Symptoms, such as fever or cough, that improve but then return or worsen
- Decline of chronic medical conditions
- Pain or pressure in your chest
- Severe sinus pain
- Swollen glands or lymph nodes in the neck or jaw
- A sore throat lasting more than one week
- Extreme fatigue

This list is not all-inclusive. You should contact your doctor for any symptoms that are severe or concerning, even if they are not listed. If you have a high temperature, a new continuous cough, loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, your doctor may test you to rule out COVID-19.

For more information on the common cold and its symptoms, treatment options, and risk factors, visit the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** or contact us at 1-866-282-6280 (TTY: 711).

¹[CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)