



Got a cold or flu?

Find out what to do



Cold and flu symptoms are similar, but flu-like illnesses are usually more severe.

Signs and symptoms	Cold	Flu-like illness
Symptom onset	Gradual	Often sudden
Fever and chills	Uncommon	Common
Head and body aches	Uncommon	Common
Fatigue, extreme tiredness	Uncommon	Common
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Cough	Sometimes	Common
Sneezing, runny nose	Common	Uncommon

Symptoms of COVID-19 can be similar to a cold or flu and range from mild to severe. See [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) for advice or phone Healthline's COVID-19 line on 0800 358 5453.

You can treat most colds and flu-like illnesses with rest and self-care at home, but you need to know when to seek medical help.

When to seek advice

Contact your medical clinic for advice if you:

- are not getting better
- are aged 65 or older
- are pregnant
- have a sore throat and are Māori or Pasifika aged 3 to 35 years
- have diabetes or a health condition affecting your breathing, heart or immune system
- are concerned or not sure what to do.

Phone first if you might have a highly infectious virus like COVID-19.

Not sure what to do?
Phone Healthline free on **0800 611 116** for health advice anytime

When to seek immediate medical help

If you have any of the following signs you may be seriously unwell and need emergency care:

- difficult or painful breathing
- confusion or difficult to wake
- bluish lips or tongue
- stiff neck
- chest pain
- rash with purple or red spots or bruises
- coughing up blood
- clammy skin
- severe shaking, rigors
- not urinating or dark coloured pee.

Phone **111** or go to the hospital emergency department right now. Do not delay.

Self-care for colds and flus



Rest – at home if possible so you don't spread bugs.



Drink plenty of water, warm lemon and honey drinks or soups to avoid dehydration.
* honey is not safe for children under one year.



Sore throat? Suck a teaspoon of honey or gargle salt water. Adults can also try a medicated lozenge, gargle or throat spray.



Blocked or runny nose? Ask your pharmacist about decongestants and nasal sprays.



Cough? Sip a lemon and honey drink or ask your pharmacist about cough lozenges or medicines that may be suitable for you.



Aches and pains? Try paracetamol OR cold and flu medicines (check doses carefully and ask your doctor or pharmacist if safe for you).

Avoid antibiotics – they can't cure colds, flus or most coughs as these are caused by viruses.

Avoid spreading and catching bugs

Take care of your health and protect your whānau and community.

Wash your hands for 20 seconds and dry them well.

Cover your coughs and sneezes.

Avoid touching your face with unclean hands.

Don't share personal items such as cups, food utensils or towels.

Clean and disinfect surfaces often, like doorknobs.

Stay home if you are sick and avoid close contact with others.

Keep coughs away from other people.



Keep well this winter



Get the flu vaccine each year – it might be free for you.



Keep your immune system strong: be active, eat healthy food, be smoke-free and get plenty of sleep.



Stay warm – heat your home to at least 18°C.



Quit smoking – smokers get more colds, symptoms are worse and last longer.