

Cold & Flu Prevention

Here are some myths and facts about colds and the flu.

Myth: You can catch the flu from a flu shot.

Fact: The flu vaccine is made from an inactive virus, so you cannot get the flu from the flu shot. Some people may be sore at the spot where the vaccination was injected, and in a few cases, may develop a fever, muscle aches and feel unwell for a day or two. In very rare cases when a person is allergic to the vaccine, there maybe an immediate reaction.

Myth: One kind of the flu is the “stomach flu.”

Fact: About one out of every three people with the flu may have an upset stomach, but this is rarely the main symptom of the flu. Other viruses and bacteria, and food poisoning are more common causes of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Myth: There is nothing you can do once you get sick with the flu except stay home in bed.

Fact: Antivirals, when started within 2 days after the flu symptoms appear, can reduce the duration of the illness and the severity of the symptoms. Symptom relief medications can also help to minimize the discomfort associated with the flu symptoms.

Myth: You can catch the flu or a cold from going outdoors in cold weather.

Fact: The flu and colds are more common in the winter months because that is when the viruses spread across the country. It has nothing to do with being outside in cold weather.

Myth: Large doses of Vitamin C can keep you from catching the flu or a cold, or will quickly cure them.

Fact: These claims have not been proven. Still, it is important to one’s overall health to consume the minimum daily requirement of Vitamin C.

Myth: “Feed a cold and starve a fever (flu).”

Fact: This is definitely not a good idea in either case. You need more fluids than usual when you have the flu for a cold. Drink plenty of water and juice, eat enough food to satisfy your appetite and drink hot fluids to ease your cough and sore throat.

Myth: Herbal remedies are an effective treatment for colds.

Fact: Echinacea and other herbs are getting a lot of publicity as cold remedies. Zinc lozenges are also said to cure cold quickly. To date, none of these claims are solidly supported by scientific studies.

Myth: Chicken soup and hot toddies are effective treatments for the flu or colds.

Fact: A bowl of chicken soup is a popular home remedy. While hot liquids can sooth a scratchy throat or cough, chicken soup has no special power to cure the flu or cold. As for hot toddies, another folk remedy, any beverage containing alcohol should be avoided when you are sick.

