

A POWER PLAN TO BEAT COLDS AND FLU

The truth about these vile viruses

Health Net believes in an ounce of prevention! Cold and flu season is just starting, and we've got the information that can help you prevent and beat both.

Although the flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses, different viruses cause them. Because they have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to tell them apart. But generally cold symptoms are much milder than flu.

THE COLD FACTS

Cold symptoms usually include a sore throat, stuffy and/or runny nose, cough and mild fever,

- **There's no vaccine.** Nearly 250 different viruses can cause the common cold. The good news is, colds generally come and go within a few days, with no serious complications.
- **There's no cure.** Drink a lot of fluids to keep your body hydrated and help prevent another infection from setting in. Avoid drinks like coffee, tea, and colas with caffeine. As for eating, follow your appetite. If you're not really hungry, try eating simple foods like white rice or broth.
- **Chicken soup** is comforting, plus the steam helps break up nasal congestion. Ginger seems to settle an upset stomach. A hot toddy may help you sleep, but beware of mixing alcohol with other cold remedies.
- **Over-the-counter cold medicines** can offer relief from aches and fever. However, doctors no longer believe in suppressing low-grade fever - except in very young and very old people, or people with certain medical conditions such as heart or lung disease.
- **Decongestants, saline nasal sprays** and gargling with salt water can all help relieve cold symptoms.

WHAT TO DO FOR THE FLU

The flu has many of the symptoms as a cold, but often causes higher fever, chills, body ache, and fatigue.

- **A yearly flu vaccination** helps reduce the chance of getting the flu for nearly everyone. A flu shot may be covered under your Health Net plan, depending on your plan type and if you meet certain criteria. Please consult your doctor, and call Health Net at the member services number listed on the back of your card.
- **The best time to get the shot is from October through November.** You shouldn't get the shot if you're allergic to chicken eggs or have had serious reactions to flu shots in the past.
- **Wash your hands** often to help protect yourself from germs.
- **Avoid** close contact with people who are sick, and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, where germs can easily enter your body.
- **Call your doctor** if your symptoms get worse, or you develop signs of a more serious problem such as nausea, vomiting, high fever, chills, chest pain or coughing up thick, yellow-green mucus.

LEARN MORE FROM HEALTH NET

Start clicking your way to more cold and flu knowledge! By going online and using the Health Net website, you can discover a world of more detailed information about colds and flu.

1. Go to www.healthnet.com/uc and log on as a member. Then select *It's Your Life-WellSite*. From there you can simply type in the subject of your choice, such as "flu" or "colds" in the "Search" box at the top of the page.
2. Click on *Preventive Guidelines* for information about child and adult immunizations.
3. Click on the *Health Encyclopedia* and then select *Healthwise® Knowledgebase* (in either English or Spanish) to be linked to an extensive searchable database of articles and information.
4. In the green bar near the top of the *It's Your Life-WellSite* home page, point your mouse to *Condition Centers* and a menu will drop down. Click "*More conditions*" then select "*Colds and Flu*." You will reach a page with a *Cold and Flu Assessment* you can take to see how much you know about each, and also a library of current articles.

Source: WebMD, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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