

Influenza vs. the common cold

The common cold is frequently called "the flu," but, in fact, the two are unrelated. The symptoms of influenza are far more severe than those associated with a cold, and the potential complications are far more serious.

Symptom	Influenza	Cold
Fever	Usual high fever (102°–104°F/39–40°C) Sudden onset, lasts 3–4 days	Rare
Headache	Usual, can be severe	Rare
General aches and pains	Usual, often severe	Sometimes, mild
Fatigue and weakness	Usual, severe, may last 2–3 weeks or more	Sometimes, mild
Extreme fatigue	Usual early onset, can be severe	Unusual
Runny, stuffy nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Common	Common
Chest discomfort, coughing	Usual, can become severe	Sometimes, mild to moderate
Complications	Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure, can worsen a current chronic condition, can be life-threatening	Can lead to sinus congestion or earache
Prevention	Annual vaccination and frequent hand washing	Frequent hand washing