

Influenza and Cold

Influenza (flu) mainly attacks respiratory tract and is transmitted via infected respiratory secretions. Peak prevalence is usually in winter season. Symptoms include fever, muscle ache, cough, headache and fatigue. Serious complications such as pneumonia may be life threatening.

Adequate rest and hydration, Aspirin, Paracetamol and cough syrup are part of the symptoms relief treatment. Antiviral drugs can be taken within 1 to 2 days after the onset of illness to shorten the symptomatic period.

Vaccination is best given in fall or early winter for high risk groups such as health care workers, patients with chronic diseases, and the elderly.

Cold can be caused by different viruses and is transmitted by coughs or sneezes droplets, or contaminated hands. Cold can happen in summer as well.

Symptoms of cold and influenza are similar though cold usually only affects the upper airway. Cold symptoms (scratchy throat and stuffy nose) last 3 to 7 days. Infants, the elderly, patients with chronic diseases, might develop complications such as sinusitis, pneumonia etc.

Treatment of cold is for symptom relief. Antibiotics should not be used unless there is bacterial infection. Washing hands if contaminated and properly disposing of nose secretions are important in preventing the spread.