



Is It a Cold or the Flu?

Your child is sent home from school with a sore throat, cough, and high fever - could it be the flu that's been going around? Or is it just a common cold?

Before you can figure out how to help your child feel better, you need to know what it is that's making him or her sick. Typically, the flu (also known as influenza) has symptoms that make a child feel worse than symptoms associated with a common cold, but it's not always that easy to tell the difference between the two.

Flu vs. Colds: A Guide to Symptoms

Questions to ask concerning...	Flu	Cold
Was your child's onset of illness . . .	sudden	slow
Does your child have a . . .	high fever	no (or mild) fever
Is your child's exhaustion level . . .	severe	mild
Is your child's cough . . .	dry	severe or hacking
Is your child's throat . . .	sore	fine
Is your child's head . . .	achy	headache-free
Is your child's appetite . . .	decreased	normal
Are your child's muscles . . .	achy	fine

If most of your answers fell into the first category, chances are that your child has the flu. If your answers usually belonged in the second category, it's most likely a cold. But don't be too quick to brush off your child's illness as just another cold. The important thing to remember is that flu symptoms can vary from child to child (and they can change as the illness progresses), so if you suspect the flu, call your child's doctor.

Treatment

If caught within the first 48 hours of the onset of symptoms, your child's flu may respond to an antiviral medicine, which can shorten the course of your child's infection by 1 or 2 days. In the meantime, take care of your child by offering plenty of fluids and extra comfort.

And if your child's doctor says it's not the flu? Ask him or her whether your child should get a flu shot.

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