

## The Myth of the "Stomach Flu"

Many people use the term "stomach flu" to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. These symptoms can be caused by many different viruses, bacteria, or even parasites. The "flu" is a term that generally refers to influenza. While vomiting, diarrhea, and being nauseous or "sick to your stomach" can sometimes be related to the flu — particularly in children — these problems are rarely the main symptoms of influenza. The flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal disease.

## Is it a Cold or the Flu?

Colds and flu are highly contagious and, in the initial stages, might seem alike. Check the following table for a comparison of the symptoms for each illness.

### Rapid Reference: Flu versus Cold

Symptom		Influenza ("Flu")	Cold (Viral URI)
Fever		Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically lasts 3-4 days	Uncommon
Headache		Very common	Uncommon
Aches and pains, muscle aches, chest discomfort		Common, Often severe	Slight to Moderate
Fatigue and weakness		Moderate - severe; can last up to 14-21 days	Mild
Extreme exhaustion		Very common early in illness	Extremely Rare
Stuffy or runny nose		Sometimes	Common
Sneezing		Sometimes	Common
Sore throat		Sometimes	Common
C O U G H	Character	Non-productive ("dry") cough is typical; nocturnal cough rare	Hacking cough, often productive; nocturnal cough rare; usually responds to cough medications
	Severity	Moderate	Mild to Moderate
	Duration	Typically 3-7 days; occasionally to 14 days	Typically 3-7 days
	Paroxysms	Uncommon	Rare
Infectious Period		1-2 d before symptom onset to 5-10 days after	Variable; typically 4-7 days after symptom onset; can be longer