

Family Doctor Tips for Teens and Adults with Colds, the Flu or COVID-19

For information on children, see “Family Doctor Tips on Caring for Children with Respiratory Symptoms”.

Most people can manage a cold, the flu or COVID-19 at home.

For mild symptoms:

- Rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Use over-the-counter **pain and fever** medications as needed to relieve your symptoms.
- **For cough:** Try a teaspoon of honey or turn on a humidifier.
- **For a sore throat:** Try lozenges or gargle with warm salt water.
- **For mild discomfort with breathing:** Keep the room cool, open the window, try relaxation exercises and shifting your position.



Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) can be used to detect a COVID-19 infection. If you test negative, take a second test at least 24 hours later to be most confident in the result. Get a good sample by swabbing your cheeks, throat, and nostrils. Instructions in multiple languages are available [here](#).

If you have COVID-19 symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, use the online **COVID-19 antiviral treatment screener** to find out if treatments may be recommended for you.

To prevent the spread of coughs, colds, flu and COVID-19, stay home while you are feeling sick and take extra precautions for 10 days.

Call your family doctor if you:

- Are unsure about how to manage your other health problems, e.g., diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, while you are sick.
- Think you are getting dehydrated, e.g., light-headed, dark-coloured urine.
- Have had a fever for more than 5 days.
- Are so tired it is hard to care for yourself.
- Are short of breath doing your usual activities.
- Feel worse after you were starting to feel better.

Call 9-1-1 or go to the emergency department if you are:

- Severely short of breath (struggling for each breath, only able to speak single words).
- Having severe chest pain.
- Feeling confused.
- Losing consciousness.



Not sure what to do? You can use **Health Connect Ontario** online (healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca) or call 8-1-1 to speak with a nurse. These services are available 24/7.

Ontario College of
Family Physicians



Colds, the flu and COVID-19 all spread easily. With most viruses, the chance of spread is highest in the first few days.

Stay home until any fever is gone and other symptoms have been getting better for at least 24 hours (48 hours if you had vomiting or diarrhea).



For 10 days from when you first noticed symptoms:

- Wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask in indoor public spaces.
- Avoid non-essential activities that you can't do with a mask on, like eating in restaurants, contact sports, playing wind instruments.
- Avoid non-essential visits to highest-risk settings, like hospitals, long-term care homes.
- Avoid non-essential visits to people who are at higher risk of serious illness.



If you have COVID-19 symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, and you have a weakened immune system (e.g. taking cancer chemotherapy, high dose steroids), stay home for 10 days.

Those you live with, and anyone you spent time with from 2 days before your symptoms started, should also take extra precautions for 10 days. If they notice symptoms, they should stay home while they are sick and be careful for 10 more days.



Other resources: Call 2-1-1 or visit 211ontario.ca if you need help with essential supports like food, money and housing. **ConnexOntario** can help you find mental health and addiction supports. Call 1-866-531-2600 or text 247247.

Avoid getting and spreading colds, flus and COVID-19

- Wear a high-quality and well-fitting mask in crowded indoor spaces.
- Ventilate and clean indoor air at home: run your furnace fan, open windows and/or use air filters.
- Wash your hands often and well; use hand sanitizer when washing is not possible.
- Stay up to date with flu shots and COVID-19 vaccine doses.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow instead of your hands.
- Stay home when you feel sick.

