



# Your Guide to Getting Better

WHEN YOU GET A COLD OR ALLERGIES HIT YOU HARD, WE KNOW THAT ALL YOU WANT IS TO FEEL BETTER.

**WHY IS YOUR** nose stuffed up? What is causing your sore throat and sneezing? It can be difficult to determine the culprit, since allergies and colds share many symptoms and both tend to occur in spring and fall.

## COMMON COLD

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Your symptoms are more severe than they are with allergies but only last about two weeks at most.
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You may run a low-grade fever of 98.6 to 100.4 degrees. (A fever greater than 100.4 may be flu.)
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Your mucus will likely be green or yellow in color, as opposed to clear mucus produced in response to allergens.
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Your throat might be sore or severely itchy.
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Your symptoms may ease with decongestants, rest and fluids.

## ALLERGIES

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Your symptoms appear around the same time each year and last around six weeks or so.
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Certain substances trigger those symptoms—for seasonal allergy sufferers it can be pollen or mold, though dust mites or pet dander are the culprits for some people.
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Watering or itchy eyes are more likely to be an allergic reaction than a cold symptom.
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Sneezing may last for weeks or even months, as opposed to the one to two days during a cold.
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Your symptoms may ease with antihistamines or nasal steroids.



## HEAL AT HOME

Sometimes all you can do is wait for an illness to run its course—but that doesn't mean you have to be miserable. Often, a home remedy can ease symptoms and help you feel better while you wait.

Looking for relief at home? Try these common solutions:



**Apple cider vinegar**—One at-home remedy for sore throats is a combination of apple cider vinegar and honey. While research shows that it is likely the honey is what is soothing your throat, there's no harm in including the apple cider vinegar, especially if it makes you feel better.



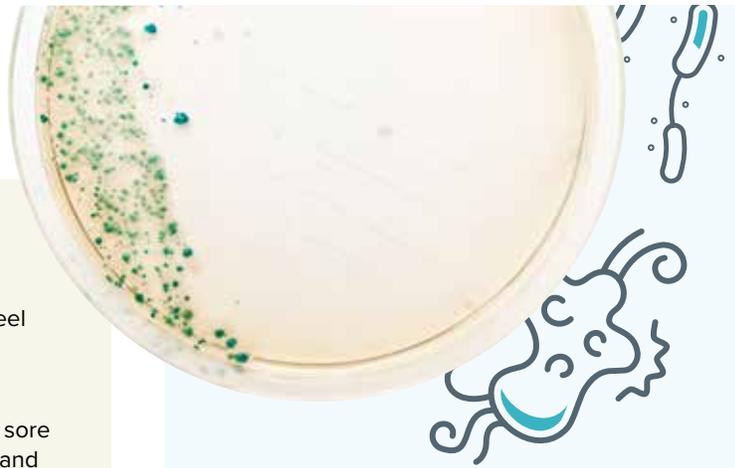
**Saltwater gargle**—Is your throat scratchy or painful from allergies or an infection? Soothe it with salt water. Mix a little table salt into an 8-ounce glass of warm water and gargle.



**Nasal rinse**—Irrigating your nasal passages is a great way to not only relieve symptoms but also prevent sinus problems. Use a homemade solution of 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon of noniodized salt and 2 cups of lukewarm water. Make sure the water is distilled or has been boiled and cooled. A bulb syringe makes it easy to rinse your nostrils, but do it over the sink—it can get messy.



**Humidifier**—Adding moisture to air, especially in bedrooms, can limit irritation, ease congestion and soothe sore throats.



## GERMS 101

Germs are tiny, living organisms that sometimes sneak into your body and make you sick. While this sounds like a sci-fi movie, it's really just a description of the four main types of germs:



## PERFECT YOUR NOSE-BLOWING TECHNIQUE

Blowing your nose is an important part of surviving the common cold. Doing it the wrong way, however, can push mucus farther back into your sinuses, defeating the purpose of blowing your nose at all.

- Step 1** Press the fingers of one hand against one side of your nose to close that nostril.
- Step 2** Hold a tissue over your nose.
- Step 3** Blow very gently out of the free nostril.

Repeat with the other nostril if needed. When you're hydrated, the mucus your body produces is thinner and easier to expel. Be sure to stay hydrated during your cold, sinus infection or virus.

## REDUCING ANTIBIOTIC USE

**Sore throats, colds and the flu—none of these conditions are enjoyable. Fortunately, all you need is a prescription for antibiotics, right? Wrong. Using antibiotics inappropriately (such as for viral illnesses) or too frequently for infections contributes to antibiotic resistance. For this reason, it's better to use antibiotics as a last resort.**

**Bacteria have evolved over time so that certain antibiotics don't work or require higher doses to eliminate infection, which perpetuates the cycle. Illnesses that are more difficult to treat today because of antibiotic resistance include skin infections, pneumonia, ear infections and tuberculosis.**

**Next time you get sick, talk with your doctor about whether it would be better for you to simply ride out your illness and manage your symptoms to improve your comfort level.**





**1. Bacteria**—These cause infections, including strep throat, pneumonia and ear infections. They don't need to be inside the human body to produce and can be treated with antibiotics.

**2. Fungi**—When it comes to fungi, you're probably most familiar with mushrooms. These multi-celled organisms prefer warm, damp environments. In the medical world, the most common kind of fungi is athlete's foot.

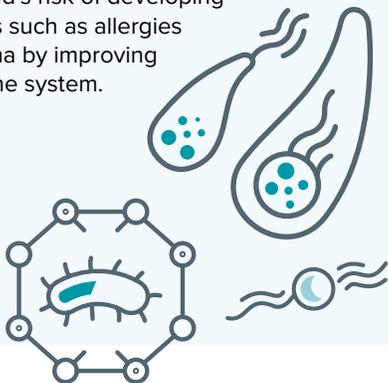
**3. Protozoa**—These germs thrive in moist environments and are often acquired by drinking contaminated water. They can spread disease, including intestinal infections that cause nausea and diarrhea.

**4. Viruses**—Some viruses can live in the air for hours or on surfaces for two days. They cause conditions such as the flu and chicken pox and cannot be treated with antibiotics.

To prevent the spread of germs:

- + Stay home (or keep your children at home) when you (or they) have a fever.
- + Don't share drinks, food or utensils.
- + Regularly clean toys and common areas (though disinfectant use isn't necessary).

Some germ exposure can be beneficial. If your infant throws a pacifier on the floor, just rinse or wipe it off and give it back instead of taking it away. Let preschoolers eat the crackers they drop on the floor, even if they're there for longer than five seconds. Avoid hand sanitizer and other methods of excessively sanitizing your child's environment. Regular hand-washing with warm, soapy water is sufficient. For the most part, exposure to bacteria found in the world has the potential to decrease a young child's risk of developing conditions such as allergies and asthma by improving the immune system.



**DON'T MISS YOUR SHOT**

Flu season can begin as early as October, and many places start offering the flu vaccine in September. Everyone should get vaccinated each year. While inoculation doesn't always keep you from getting the flu, the antibodies the vaccine prompts your body to create can limit the severity and length of the illness.

The flu vaccine isn't the only shot you may need. If you're traveling internationally, check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website to learn which vaccines are recommended to protect you against illness.

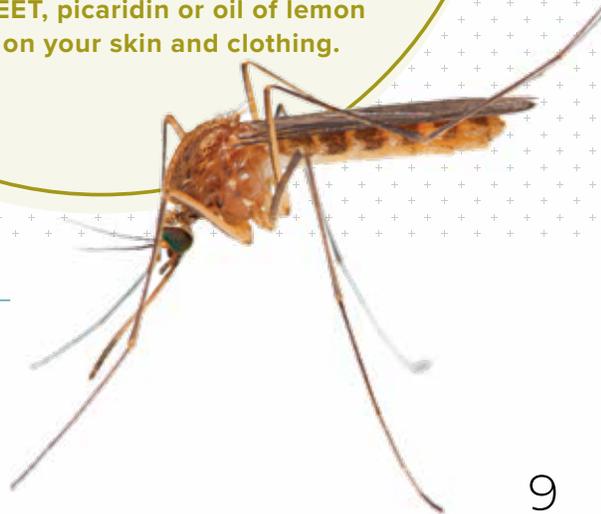
These vaccines include:

- Measles
- Yellow fever
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Typhoid
- Rabies



WHAT IS  
*Dengue Fever?*

**One travel-borne illness that has recently received concern is dengue fever. Caused by one of four related viruses, dengue fever causes high fever, severe headache and eye pain, joint and muscle pain, and rash. The disease is transmitted through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito and has no effective vaccine. If you travel to an affected area—most commonly tropical, urban areas—such as Puerto Rico, Latin America and Southeast Asia—stay in air-conditioned lodgings when possible, keep doors and windows closed, and use repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus on your skin and clothing.**



Be prepared for flu season. Visit [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu) to learn the best ways to guard yourself and your family against the flu, when to vaccinate and how to recognize flu symptoms. You can learn more about vaccines at [cdc.gov/vaccines](http://cdc.gov/vaccines).