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# Common Cold



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## Overview

Sneezing, scratchy throat, runny nose -- everyone knows

the first signs of a cold, probably the most common illness known. These symptoms are usually caused by a **viral infection**. Although the **common cold** is usually mild, with symptoms lasting 1 to 2 weeks, it is a leading cause of doctor visits and missed days from school and work. According to the CDC, 22 million school days are lost annually in the United States because of the **common cold**.

In the course of a year, people in the U.S. suffer 1 billion colds, according to some estimates.

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Children have about 6 to 10 **colds** a year. One important reason why colds are so common in children is because they are often in close contact with each other in **daycare** centers and schools. In

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as 12 a year. Adults average about 2 to 4 colds a year, although the range varies widely. Women, especially those aged 20 to 30 years, have more colds than men, possibly because of their closer contact with children. On average, people older than age 60 have fewer than one cold a year.

In the U.S., most colds occur during the fall and winter. Beginning in late August or early September, the rate of colds increases slowly for a few weeks and remains high until March or April, when it declines. The seasonal variation may relate to the opening of schools and to cold weather, which prompt people to spend more time indoors and increase the chances that viruses will spread to you from someone else.

Seasonal changes in relative humidity also may affect the prevalence of colds. The most **common cold** -causing viruses survive better when humidity is low-the colder months of the year. Cold weather also may make the inside lining of your nose drier and more vulnerable to viral infection.

WebMD Medical Reference | Reviewed by Carol DerSarkissian on February 05, 2020








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