



Cold and Flu Season Guide

BACKROAD MOBILE HEALTH
Cache Valley, Utah

What to do at home, when to stay home, and when to get care

Cold, flu, or COVID-19? Symptoms overlap. A test is the only way to know.

	Cold	Flu	COVID-19
Start	Gradual, over a day or two	Sudden, often within hours	Gradual or sudden
Fever	Uncommon or mild	Common, often high, with chills	Common
Aches and tiredness	Mild	Strong. Feels like you got hit by a truck	Varies, can be strong
Main symptoms	Runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat	Dry cough, headache, sore throat, body aches	Cough, sore throat, congestion, sometimes loss of taste or smell

RSV looks like a cold in most adults but can be serious in babies and older adults.

Care at home

- **Rest and fluids.** Water, broth, and warm tea all count.
- **Fever and aches:** acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Follow the label dose.
- **Cough:** honey (ages 1 and up), warm fluids, a humidifier.
- **Stuffy nose:** saltwater (saline) spray or rinse.
- **Sore throat:** warm salt water gargle, throat lozenges (adults and older children).
- **Never give aspirin** to a child or teen with a fever or flu.
- **Children under 4:** no over-the-counter cough and cold medicine.

When can I go back to normal?

- Stay home until your symptoms are getting better overall **and** you have had no fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine.
- For the next 5 days, take extra care: wash hands often, cover coughs, keep your distance from others, and consider a mask indoors.
- A lingering cough can last a few weeks. That alone does not mean you are still contagious.

Flu: ask about antiviral medicine early

- Prescription flu antivirals work best when started **within 48 hours** of the first symptoms.
- They matter most for young children, pregnant women, adults 65 and older, and people with asthma, COPD, diabetes, heart, or kidney disease.

See a clinician soon (same day or next day) if:

- Fever of 103°F or higher, or a fever lasting more than 3 days.
- You start to get better, then get worse or the fever comes back.
- Symptoms last more than 10 days without improving.
- Ear pain, face or sinus pain, or a very sore throat with trouble swallowing.
- Wheezing, or asthma or COPD that is flaring up.
- Signs of dehydration: very little urine, dizziness, dry mouth, or no tears in a child.
- You are in a higher-risk group and think you have the flu.

Call 911 or go to the ER if:

- Trouble breathing, fast breathing, or you cannot speak a full sentence.
- Chest pain or pressure that does not go away.
- Blue or gray lips or face.
- Confusion, extreme drowsiness, or hard to wake up.
- Seizure, or you cannot keep any fluids down.
- **Children:** ribs pulling in with each breath, no wet diaper in 8 hours, or a stiff neck.
- **Any baby under 3 months** with a fever of 100.4°F or higher needs care right away.

Stay ahead of it

- **Get a flu shot every year.** Fall is a good time. Pharmacies and the health department offer them.
- Wash hands with soap for 20 seconds, especially before eating and after being out.
- Stay home when sick, and keep sick kids home until they meet the guidelines above.
- Cover coughs with your elbow. Clean shared surfaces such as phones, doorknobs, and remotes.
- Open a window or run a fan when you have guests who are sick.

Need a visit at home? Call 435-999-4455 or email esorensen@backroadhealth.com

General information only. It is not a substitute for medical advice. In an emergency, call 911. Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222.

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