

Beware of cold viruses even during summertime

July 24 2013, by Bradford Schwarz

Is it just me or do summer colds seem much worse than winter colds?
And why do we get colds during the summer anyway?

The sun is out, windows are open and almost everyone is outside and active. It just doesn't seem like we should be getting a "[cold](#)" when it is hot.

So let's set the facts straight concerning summer colds. Although not as common during the summer months, colds are caused by viruses and can occur any time of year. This year alone there will be more than 1 billion colds in the United States. Adults acquire an average of two to four colds per year, and young children will suffer from an average of six to eight colds per year. That's a lot of down time suffering from [cold symptoms](#).

There are a variety of cold-producing viruses such as the rhino-, corona- and parainfluenza that cause upper-respiratory infections primarily during the winter months. However, a new virus is introduced during the summer months.

The pesky enterovirus, which can often lead to complex and prolonged [symptoms](#), spreads by coughing and sneezing, and by the fecal-to-oral route, often meaning that proper hand-washing technique has not been followed. The enterovirus can demonstrate the usual cold symptoms of runny nose, hacking cough, headache; low grade fever, and watery eyes. However, additional symptoms of diarrhea, along with [sore throats](#) and rashes may appear with the enterovirus.

So what do you need to know concerning a summer verses winter cold?

Winter cold viruses tend to make you feel really sick, and then after feeling miserable for five to seven days, it's pretty much over, whereas, summer colds just seem to go on and on.

One must also consider that if the symptoms act greater than the typical cold, you may have manifestations of an allergy or potential [bacterial infection](#).

While we've already established that a cold is caused by a virus, [allergy symptoms](#) are an [immune system response](#) to allergens such as grass, pollen, dust, and dander from pets. A few distinguishing features of an allergy are itchiness of the mouth, eyes and throat. Also, the type of mucous drainage is often an indicator of a cold verses an allergy. A yellow mucus is typically seen with a cold, whereas, a thin, clear/ watery mucus drainage is usually seen with allergies.

A cold requires symptomatic care (rest, fluids, chicken noodle soup and early use of zinc supplement may shorten the symptomatic period) while an allergy requires an antihistamine medication (several non-sedating medications are available over the counter), nasal irrigation with sterile saline spray or a neti pot.

Persistent or increasing symptoms, fever, severe sore throat or unusually bad headaches necessitate an evaluation by your primary care provider.

We are all exposed to cold viruses no matter what time of year. Help protect yourself by practicing proper hand washing, heading off cold symptoms with a zinc supplement, and staying active.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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