

How Do You Catch a Cold?

Although some cold viruses may possibly be spread by coughing or sneezing, that is usually not the case. They are spread from hand-to-hand contact. For example, someone with a cold blows their nose then shakes your hand or touches surfaces that you also touch.

Cold viruses can live on pens/pencils, computer keyboards, coffee mugs, door handles, and other objects for hours, so it's easy to come into contact with such viruses during daily life.

However, the key to remember is that just being exposed to a cold virus does not have to mean that you'll catch a cold. If your immune system is operating at its peak, it should actually be quite easy for you to fend off the virus without ever getting sick.

If your immune system is impaired, on the other hand, it's akin to having an open-door policy for viruses; they'll easily take hold in your body. So the simple and short answer is, you catch a cold due to impairment in your immune system. There are many ways this can result, but the more common contributing factors are:

1. Eating too much sugar and too many grains
2. Not getting enough rest
3. Using insufficient strategies to address emotional stressors in your life
4. Vitamin D deficiency, as discussed below
5. Any combination of the above

Vitamin D Deficiency: One Reason You May "Catch" a Cold

It's estimated that the average U.S. adult typically has two to four colds each year, while children may have up to 12! One reason for the widespread prevalence may be that vitamin D deficiency is incredibly common in the United States, especially during the winter months when cold (and flu) viruses are at their peak.

Research has confirmed that "catching" colds and flu may actually be a symptom of an underlying vitamin D deficiency. Less than optimal vitamin D levels will significantly impair your immune response and make you far more susceptible to contracting colds, influenza, and other respiratory infections.

In the largest and most nationally representative study of its kind to date, involving about 19,000 Americans, people with the lowest vitamin D levels reported having significantly more recent colds or cases of the flu -- and the risk was even greater for those with chronic respiratory disorders like asthma.

At least five additional studies also show an inverse association between lower respiratory tract infections and vitamin D levels. But the research is very clear, the higher your vitamin D level, the lower your risk of contracting colds, flu, and other respiratory tract infections.

It's not surprising, then, that the average American gets so many colds each year, as current guidelines for optimal intake and normal vitamin D levels are far too low -- and since most people do not get adequate sun exposure on a daily basis (which is what produces vitamin D in your skin) many are deficient. I strongly believe you could avoid colds and influenza entirely by maintaining your vitamin D level in the optimal range.

Based on the latest research, many experts now agree you need about 35 IU's of vitamin D per pound of body weight. This recommendation also includes children, the elderly and pregnant women.

However, keep in mind that vitamin D requirements are highly individual, as your vitamin D status is dependent on numerous factors, such as the color of your skin, your location, and how much sunshine you're exposed to on a regular basis. So, although these recommendations may put you closer to the ballpark of what most people likely need, it is simply impossible to make a blanket recommendation that will cover everyone's needs.

The only way to determine your optimal dose is to get your blood tested. Ideally, you'll want to maintain a vitamin D level of 50-80 ng/ml year-round.

Hazle Drugs can match the particular Vitamin D product to your own individual needs. Over the counter strengths range from 400 IU - 5000 IU's. Vitamin D is available in tablets, capsules, liquid, chewable tablets, and liquid drops.

For more information on Vitamin D and how to prevent getting a cold, please contact Bill Spear, R.Ph, Certified Clinical Nutritionist at Hazle Drugs 1 E. Broad St. Hazleton, Pa 18201 570-454-2476

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