

What are respiratory infections?



These are infections that affect the nose, throat, sinuses or lungs. These infections can be caused by different viruses, the most common being the influenza virus (flu), the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19).

Symptoms appear suddenly, and include fever, a new or worsening cough, sore throat, muscle aches, severe fatigue, and headaches.

Colds can also cause respiratory illnesses. Some of the symptoms may look similar (e.g., runny nose or congestion, cough, fatigue). Cold symptoms are often milder and cause less severe illness.

What to remember

Pay attention to your health and to the onset of symptoms of infectious respiratory illnesses. If you have symptoms, follow the instructions to protect others and take care of yourself.

If I am a visitor or family member and I am sick, I postpone my visit until I no longer have any symptoms. I wait until I have had no fever and my symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours. I wear a mask when visiting a care or living facility as long as I have a cough.

If I am sick and need to seek medical attention, I advise the staff upon my arrival so they can take the necessary precautions.

For more information:

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/flu-cold-and-gastroenteritis>



Respiratory Infections

Guide for Patients and Visitors



Centre intégré
de santé
et de services sociaux
de l'Outaouais

Québec

How did I catch this virus?

Respiratory viruses are contagious; they are mainly spread through droplets released when a sick person talks, coughs, or sneezes, as well as through contact with contaminated hands or surfaces.

After exposure, the risk of infection depends on each person's ability to defend themselves against the virus. A weakened immune system (age, pregnancy, chronic disease) increases the risk of severe forms. Vaccination helps you protect yourself.

How will I be treated?

Healthy individuals generally recover on their own, but resting, staying well hydrated, analgesics (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen), and nasal hygiene—especially in young children—can help relieve symptoms.

For some individuals at risk of serious complications, screening may be requested to verify which virus is causing the disease and an antiviral treatment may be prescribed.

For more information on when to seek medical attention:

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/flu-cold-and-gastroenteritis/self-care-guide-covid-19>



What does this mean for me?

Generally, a person is considered contagious 24 hours before the onset of symptoms and up to eight days after. These delays vary depending on the virus involved and the health status of the infected person.

Therefore, for the duration of symptoms and until 48 hours after the last fever spike, precautions must be taken to limit transmission.



In a hospital or long term care facility:

- You will be screened to identify the virus. This will allow the health care team to adjust treatment and duration of the precautions.
- You will be placed in isolation. You will be asked to remain in your room or bed area, with the privacy curtain drawn.
- A sign will be posted at the entrance of your room indicating the precautions to be taken.
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Staff and visitors will need to wear a gown, gloves and a mask at your bedside.
- A toilet or commode will be reserved for your use.



At home:

- Wash your hands regularly, especially:
 - After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
 - Before preparing, handling or eating food.
- Take preventative actions such as:
 - Staying home if you have a fever.
 - Wearing a mask if you have a new or worsening cough, sore throat or nasal congestion while with others.
 - Coughing into your elbow.
 - Using tissues and discarding them immediately after use.

For more guidance, refer to the decision support tool:



<https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/en/document-001101/>