ILLLNESS TIMING
Athletes can develop illnesses any time of the year, but evidence shows it is more prevalent during the fall and early winter time. Often this is nearing the end of a very hard training year or the building-up phase for winter sports and athletes may be feeling more rundown.

International travel and changes in time zones, climates, sleep patterns and stress combined with inadequate nutrition / hydration may all contribute to a diminished immune system and thus an increased chance of getting sick.

With a vital year ahead, it will be key to stay healthy & illness-free!

COLDs vs. FLU
• Both are a type of infection caused by a virus.
• Both can be passed by touching a surface and then touching your nose or mouth or airborne from a nearby cough or sneeze.
• You may be contagious from 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick.
• It is a myth that you can get a cold or flu from being chilly or wet or use of an air conditioner.

Colds
• Adults have an average of 2-3 colds per year, and children have even more.
• On average a cold lasts 7-10 days.
• A cold begins when a virus attaches to the lining of your nose or throat.
• Caused by one of more than 200 possible viruses, so symptoms can vary.

Symptoms:
  o Scratchy or sore throat – usually better in 1-2 days
  o Sneezing
  o Stuffy nose & congestion
  o Watery eyes
  o Mucus draining from your nose into your throat
  o Non-productive cough

Flu (Influenza)
• Caused by a specific influenza virus affecting both the upper and lower respiratory systems affecting millions each year.

Symptoms:
  o Fever (higher than 102°F) / chills
  o Productive cough
  o Sore throat
  o Runny or stuffy nose & congestion
  o Muscle or body aches
  o Persistent headaches
  o Fatigue
  o Occasional nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

IMMUNE SYSTEM
What is it?
Our body’s natural defense system. It works to protect against bacteria, viruses and parasites which can all cause illness.

What contributes to a healthy system?
• Good nutrition
• Adequate hydration
• Training load & type
• Sleep quality and amount
• Recovery
• Stress management
• Sport/Life balance
• Hobbies (non-sport activities)
• Relationships
• Immunizations
• Regular medical and dental check-ups
**BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM**

- ALWAYS wash your hands using soap and water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet, blowing your nose or touching potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Try to avoid frequent touching of your face.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Regulate your training load with proper periodization.
- Consider utilizing a training diary to track load and recovery.
- Maximize recovery.
- Reduce training if you show signs of over-training such as: excess fatigue, performance slump, excessive muscle soreness, low motivation, ongoing injuries, and elevated morning pulse.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Ensure adequate hydration especially when traveling.
- Get adequate sleep.
- Avoid open containers of communal food where no utensils are available.
- Stay home when sick to limit the potential for spreading the illness.
- Ensure your vaccines are updated and you carry proof with you when you travel.
- Consider getting a flu shot each fall
  - Flu vaccines are 70-90% effective in young, healthy population.
  - The flu vaccine is an inactive form of the virus so you cannot get sick from it.
- Reduce stress. Find those things which help you unwind and relax.

**SELF-HELP TREATMENTS**

- Use great caution with over-the-counter cold medications as many are included on the WADA prohibited list.
- Try to eat small meals even if you do not feel like it, including protein.
- Hydrate well (water, sport drink, juices and non-caffeinated beverages).
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol as these can contribute to dehydration.
- Drink warm water with honey and lemon to soothe a sore throat.
- Use a moist humidifier in your room.
- Use steam inhalation to help clear congestion.
- Gargle with warm salt water.
- Avoid air travel, if possible, especially if ear congestion is present.
- Sleep with elevated head.
- Rest with reduced or no training, especially if fever is present.
- Use a Neti-pot™ to help clear congestion.
- Use saline nasal sprays to keep mucous membranes hydrated.
- Antibiotics should only be used if a physician determines you have a bacterial infection. If given antibiotics, you must complete the entire prescribed dosage.

**WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE**

- Fever over 102°F
- Productive cough with yellow, green or blood-streaked sputum.
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Pain in your ears
- Sinus pressure
- Persistent sore throat
- Swollen lymph glands
- Dizziness / Fainting
- Persistent vomiting
- Disorientation / Confusion
- Any symptoms lasting more than 1 week

If you have questions or need more information, contact a member of the USOC Sports Medicine Team.

For more information on cold and flus, see the Centers for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).