

If you have a cold, should you exercise?

Yes and no. Moderate exercise (30 minutes a day, on most, if not all, days of the week) actually lowers your risk for respiratory infections, said David C. Nieman from the American College of Sports Medicine. But prolonged, intense exercise, on the other hand, can weaken your immune system and allow viruses to gain a foothold and spread. If you're already sick with a respiratory infection (common cold or flu), approach exercise cautiously during your illness. To help you decide whether to hit the gym or stay in bed, Dr. Nieman says this:

DO exercise moderately if your cold symptoms are confined to your head. If you're dealing with a runny nose or sore throat, moderate exercise is okay. Intense exercise can be continued a few days after symptoms go away (in cases of the common cold).

DON'T sweat out your illness. Exercise during an illness does NOT help cure it.

DO stay in bed if your illness has spread beyond your head. Respiratory infections, fever, swollen glands, and extreme aches and pains all indicate that you should rest up, not work out.

DON'T jump back in too soon. If you're recovering from a more serious bout of cold or flu, gradually ease back into exercise after at least 2 weeks of rest.

"In general, if your symptoms are from the neck up, go ahead and take a walk," said Dr. Nieman. "But if you have a fever or general aches and pains, rest up and let your body get over the illness."

