

Does Being Cold Really Give You a Cold?

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Welcome to my column. Each week I will answer one or two questions, from my perspective on the practice of medicine ([see my bio](#)) that you, our friends and neighbors send in to us. To start off I put a question box in my office, so let us begin.

Q. This from H.B in Hampton Bays: Does being cold give us a cold?

A. In a word ... NO. However, being cold is a form of thermal stress on our system. Stress is one of the five processes that lead to immune suppression and with immune suppression comes an increased risk of all sorts of illnesses. The other four processes being poor nutrition, infection, toxins and trauma. Essentially, stress occurs when we are in some way expending energy faster than we can regenerate it at that moment. Sensing this imbalance the body kicks in with a number of mechanisms to compensate and protect us, all too often robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Initially, when we are under stress there is an increased amount of adrenaline that is produced and released. This gives us the capability of "fight or flight."

Historically, this gave our ancestors the protective ability to run away from the saber-toothed tiger or to stand their ground against an enemy. If the stress is more chronic then there is an increased release of another adrenal hormone called cortisol. Cortisol does many wonderful things for us such as giving us a higher stable level of energy, improved memory function and lower sensitivity to pain. But, cortisol also has a dark side, the problem is that with long term higher levels of release it is also an immune suppressant. So as cortisol levels go up our immune function goes down. Since the final effects of the stress response have common pathways, if we generally have a stressful lifestyle with work, family and maybe the occasional bad habit or two, then being in the cold can easily be the straw that breaks the camel's back and we get sick.

The bottom line is that trying to warm up with Irish coffee won't help, it will actually make things worse as the alcohol stresses our liver. A better plan is to find peace and balance in your life, eat a good diet with as much organic food as possible, take a good broad spectrum, natural source, multivitamin and some Cyto-Ess to support the immune system and let the body do what the body does best and that is to heal.

[Send in your questions](#) and be well.