

# Podcast 22 – The Common Cold – The Same the World Over

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,  
with Rob McCormack

*Podcast Number 22 – The Common Cold – The Same the World Over*

<http://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/podcast22.mp3>

Hi,

There are many things we have in common, whether we come from Australia, India, China, Germany, Brazil or indeed any country in the world. One of those things is getting a cold, a common cold. I'm not talking about influenza, more commonly called the 'flu'. Flu is a much more serious disease and can affect people very badly, especially the old. The common cold is, by contrast, almost never serious and is the most common disease in people all over the world.

Since I retired in July of 2011, I haven't had a cold. That's more than two years. Normally, an adult gets at least one or two colds per year. I certainly did when I was working. So it was great that I had not had a cold for such a long time. However, that ended 2 weeks ago when I got the first signs of a sore throat.

Everyone knows the symptoms of a cold. It starts with that tickle in your throat which becomes a dryness in the throat. Then your throat feels like it has been rubbed with sandpaper. It's not pleasant. In my case, I started to feel a sore throat coming at around lunchtime. I thought, ahh, I'll bet this is a cold coming on. For a while, all I had was the sore throat. I was hoping that maybe it would stop there, that all I would get is a sore throat which would be gone in the morning. But by the time I went to bed, at around

10.30pm, I wasn't feeling very well at all. My body was starting to ache and my throat felt like it was on fire. I woke up next morning and my body was aching even more, my nose had started to run and I had a headache. My sore throat was still there and I was also getting a rasping cough. I knew that it was a cold and that I would just have to wait for it to run its course. My cold lasted about a week, which is the normal period for a cold to last. There is no cure for the common cold. You just have to 'grin and bear it' and wait until it passes. We can do some things to make us feel better, although they won't make the cold go away any faster.



For example, headache tablets will reduce a headache, warm drinks will ease a sore throat and nose drops or spray will help a stuffy nose. I also find that cough lozenges make a sore throat feel a little better. For more information, visit <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>

Here are some facts about the common cold. It is caused by a virus. There are over 200 types of viruses that can cause the

common cold, which is why it's not possible to be immunized against a cold. There are just too many virus types to be covered in a single immunization. A person catches a cold when they touch or breathe in the fluid droplets from another person who has a cold. This may happen when you breathe in the air near a person who has coughed or sneezed. You can also get a cold by touching something that has been handled by a person with a cold, like a towel or a railing.

Unfortunately the cold virus can survive for many hours in the air or on a surface. So I guess it's impossible to avoid getting a cold at some time. It is interesting to note how long a person with a cold is infectious. Being infectious means that you can give someone else your cold. A person is infectious for about a day before their symptoms show and about five days after their symptoms start.

While it's impossible to prevent colds from spreading, we can reduce them by regularly washing our hands. The most common way to get a cold is through your hands touching something with the virus on it, after which you touch your face, mouth or eyes. So washing your hands regularly may help to remove viruses before they get into your body. In some countries, people with colds wear masks to prevent their cold from spreading to others. This can certainly help to reduce the chance of getting or giving a cold, although it is not done very often in Australia.

People usually get colds more often in the winter. This is because we are most often indoors in winter along with other people and we have closer contact with them. Therefore there is more chance of cold viruses spreading.

So with all that in mind, I think I can explain why, after retiring from work, I went for 2 years before I got a cold. It's just simply that I was not mixing indoors as often with so many other people. So I had less chance of coming into contact with the cold virus. The downside for me has been that I have been mixing with fewer people since I retired. I

have actually missed that. Even though there's a risk of getting a cold, it's great to be able to mix with, and enjoy the company of, other people. That's what makes life interesting.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it by clicking the comments link at the top of this story. You can leave your comment in English or in any language and I will translate it. Or, you can send me an email at [rob@slowenglish.info](mailto:rob@slowenglish.info). I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. Perhaps you could suggest a topic for a future podcast. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

## Podcast 22 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the test as many times as you like. Your individual scores are not recorded.

[Start quiz](#)

### Vocabulary

ache = when something is hurting

avoid = to stop something from happening

certainly = to be sure of something

contact = to touch or to be near somebody else

cough = when you push air out of your lungs very quickly and you make a sound

cough lozenges = small sweets that you suck, in order to stop your cough

cure = when you can make a disease or sickness go away

downside = a disadvantage, something which is not good

drops = the smallest amount of a liquid or fluid. For example, drops of water or medicine

dryness = when something is dry, with no water

enjoy the company of = to be with other people and to like it

facts = things that are true

fire = when something is burning

fluid droplets = very small drops of a liquid. Droplets are so small you cannot see them

grin and bear = you can't do anything about it. You must wait until it is finished.

handled = to touch something with your hand

headache = when you have a pain in your head

immunized = to be given something which stops you from getting a disease

indoors = inside a building

lunchtime = the meal in the middle of the day

masks = something which you put over your mouth and nose

mixing = to be near other people and to talk and be with them

period = a time, for example, 1 week.

pleasant = when something is nice

prevent = to stop something from happening

quiz = a test where you are asked questions to see how much you know

railing = a bar which you hang onto. For example, when you go upstairs

rasping = a sound which is rough and unpleasant

recorded = kept

reduce = to make smaller or less

rubbed = to move something back and forward against something else

run its course = to go from the start to the finish

sandpaper = paper with sand stuck to it. Used to rub on wood and make it smooth.

serious = when bad things can happen

signs = when you can see or feel something

sneezed = when you push air out through your nose quickly

sore = when something hurts

spray = when you turn a liquid into small drops or droplets

spreading = when something goes from one person to another

stuffy = when your nose is not clear or it is blocked

surface = the outside of something. For example, the surface of the water or the table

survive = to stay alive

symptoms = the signs that you have a disease or sickness

throat = your throat is at the back of your mouth

tickle = when you can feel something lightly

towel = a piece of cloth used to wipe your body or hands