
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Is 'man flu' real?

NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Dan

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Dan, and joining me today is Neil. Hi, Neil.

Neil

Hi, everyone!

Dan

Bless you! Are you ok?

Neil

I think I'm coming down with something serious.

Dan

It's just a case of **the sniffles**.

Neil

The sniffles is an informal way of saying a cold or flu. It comes from the sniffing sound people make when they have **a runny nose**.

Dan

And a **runny nose** is when liquid mucus keeps leaking from our nose – usually when we are sick. I'm afraid you'll just have to **soldier on** Neil.

Neil

To soldier on means to continue despite difficulty. I'm dying! What's it about anyway?

Dan

It's about 'man flu', and whether it's actually real, or just something men like to complain about. We'll give you 6 words and expressions – and, of course, our quiz question.

Neil

Alright, fire away.

Dan

In a survey conducted by Nuts magazine that asked its readers how long they took to recover from a cold or flu, where women put an average of 1.5 days, what did men put?

- a) 1 day
- b) 2 days
- c) 3 days

Neil

I'm going to say 3 days. The threat of 'man flu' is real.

Dan

Well, we'll find out later, but let's clarify. **'Man flu'** is the tendency that many people believe men have to complain about a minor illness, such as a cold or flu, and act as if they were suffering from something a lot more serious.

Neil

Yes. But science cannot say whether men do actually suffer more than women, or if men just tend to complain more.

Dan

Well, let's hear from this British couple about whether they think 'man flu' is real or not.

INSERT: Vox

British Man

Men definitely do suffer a lot more, I think, than women do when we get flu.

British Woman

Yeah, I'm not so convinced. I feel like they just complain more.

British Man

It wipes me out.

British Woman

I was ill recently and I just carried on and went to work and everything. And when Chris had got sick recently he was on the sofa and couldn't really do anything, so...

Dan

And it seems that it's not just in the UK. Listen to this BBC Journalist interviewing a woman from Europe.

INSERT: Vox

BBC Journalist

You're from the Netherlands. Have you ever accused your boyfriend of having man flu?

Dutch woman

Oh, absolutely yes. Yeah.

BBC Journalist

What have you accused him of doing?

Dutch woman

...whining?

Neil

Whining is when someone complains repeatedly and often in an annoying way about something. So, there certainly seems to be something there...but nothing has been proven, right?

Dan

Well, a recent scientific study has indicated that there could be something to 'man flu' after all. Doctor Kyle Sue, an assistant professor of family medicine at Memorial University of Newfoundland in Canada, has suggested that there could be a difference between men and women when it comes to respiratory diseases.

Neil

Respiratory meaning related to breathing. He says that there was already a lot of evidence from existing studies suggesting men experience worse, longer-lasting **symptoms**.

Dan

Symptoms are the feelings of illness caused by a disease. Listen to him explain why this is.

Doctor Kyle Sue, Memorial University, Newfoundland

It seems that the higher the testosterone levels, the lower the immune response to these types of infections, whereas the higher the oestrogen level, the stronger the immune response.

Neil

Testosterone and oestrogen are hormones that exist in both men and women. Testosterone is higher in males and oestrogen is higher in females. Dr. Sue's research suggests that the more oestrogen a person has, the better able they are to fight off the infection. That's it then! Man flu is real!

Dan

Hold your horses, Neil. There are two problems. First of all, the Royal college of GPs in the UK says that there is no such thing as 'man flu'. And secondly, even Dr Sue admits that these results, including his own, are only 'suggestive' and are not 'definitive'.

Neil

So, basically he's saying that there is a suggestion that 'man flu' exists, but the evidence so far cannot say for sure.

Dan

Exactly. More studies need to be done. But you know what we can be sure about? The answer to this week's quiz question. I asked you in a survey conducted by Nuts magazine that asked its readers how long they took to recover from a cold or flu, where women put an average of 1.5 days, what did men put?

- a) 1 day
- b) 2 days
- c) 3 days

Neil

And I said 3 days.

Dan

And you were right!

Neil

Good!

Dan

The men said they took twice as long to recover!

Neil

It must be all that manly testosterone. Let's review our vocabulary, shall we? Before I have to have a lie down?

Dan

Our first was **the sniffles**. If you have the sniffles, you have a cold, informally speaking. What's the best cure for **the sniffles** Neil?

Neil

Stay in bed and sweat it out, my mum always said. Just make sure you have lots of tissues to deal with your **runny nose**. That's when a person's nose leaks mucus, usually because they are ill. Yuck!

Dan

Next we had **soldier on**. This phrasal verb means to continue despite difficulty. When was the last time you had to **soldier on**, Neil?

Neil

A few days ago when I went the whole day without eating any lunch! Then we had '**man**

flu. That's is the name given to the situation where a person, often a man, tends to complain and exaggerate a small illness such as a cold. Do you do that, Dan?

Dan

I'm sure my wife would say I do! Next we had **whining**. If you **whine**, you complain repeatedly and often in an annoying way.

Neil

Like my children did last time I didn't buy them ice-cream. And finally we had **symptoms**. These are the feelings of illness caused by a disease. What are the symptoms of flu, Dan?

Dan

A headache, aching muscles, and a fever. And that's the end of this 6 Minute English! Don't forget to check out our YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. There you made it. You can collapse now.

Neil

Bye.

Dan

Bye!