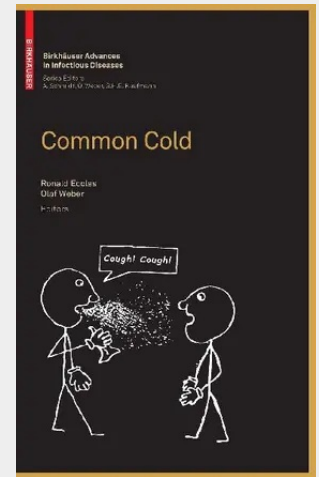


Common Cold

The common cold is unlike any other human disease because of two factors: firstly, it is arguably the most common human disease and, secondly, it is one of the most complex diseases because of the number of viruses that cause the familiar syndrome of sneezing, sore throat, runny nose and nasal congestion. These two factors have made a 'cure' for the common cold one of the most difficult scientific and clinical endeavours (a topic often discussed in the popular media, where comparisons are made with the ease of putting a man on the moon). The present book brings together a wide range of experts from epidemiologists to virologists and pharmacologists to look at recent advances in our knowledge of the common cold. In some respects the book is unique, as it focuses on the common cold, a syndrome so familiar to the layperson but one that receives little attention from the scientist and clinician. The common cold can be viewed from many different aspects as illustrated in Figure 1. The core knowledge for understanding the common cold must first come from virology and this is discussed in several chapters of the book. There have been major advances in this field because of the use of new methods of detecting viruses such as polymerase chain reaction techniques that have greatly aided our understanding of the epidemiology of viruses associated with common cold.

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