
Important information about URI's



Upper respiratory infections, often abbreviated to URI's, are common illnesses affecting the nose, throat and sometimes the chest. These may be caused by bacteria or a virus. The common cold and bronchitis are each a type of URI.

"It takes about two (2) weeks of treatment to cure a cold, but without treatment, it takes about 14 days."

SYMPTOMS:

Sneezing	Temperature below 100° F.	Fatigue
Nasal stuffiness	Scratchy or sore throat	Teary or watery eyes
Colored nasal drainage	General body aches	Cough
Full feeling in ears		

Bacterial and Viral Infections

The common cold can be caused by one of more than 200 different viruses. ***Viruses do not respond to antibiotics.*** Using an antibiotic when you don't need one can lead to antibiotic resistance.

Bronchitis is an infection of the trachea and bronchial tubes. It is characterized by the usual cold symptoms plus a harsh cough. The cough is the most prominent symptom. *It may be caused by a bacteria,(2-5%) or a virus, which accounts for 95% of all cases.* If it is bacterial, antibiotics may be prescribed. When an antibiotic is used, it is important to take them as directed until they are all gone.

Influenza is caused by a virus. Symptoms may include the usual 'cold' symptoms, but often include a sudden high fever and headache. There are some prescription anti-viral medications available, which if started within the first 48 hours of the illness, may shorten the length of the illness.

Treatment of URI

Whether you have a viral or bacterial infection, over-the-counter medications and common sense can help make you more comfortable.

- Analgesics (i.e. Tylenol or Advil) if you are not allergic to them, Follow the pkg. directions. This reduces fever, aches and pain.
- Drink more fluids - water, fruit juices, sport drinks. This keeps you hydrated and helps fight off the symptoms.
- Avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages - these dehydrate you.
- Rest is the most important element in the treatment of URI's.
- Add humidity to your living/bed room especially during the winter months. This helps keep your throat and nasal passages moist.
- Cough & Cold medications - If you are not on a *prescription* cough/cold medication, you may use an OTC cough or cold medication.
- Saline gargles for sore throats: add 1 teaspoon of salt to 1/2 glass of warm water and gargle after meals and at bedtime.

When to Contact Your Health Care Provider

A cold can lead to a more serious secondary bacterial infection, in 2-5% of cases. If you experience any of the following symptoms or if your 'cold' symptoms last longer than 7-10 days, see your health care provider as soon as possible.

- * **Moderate, severe facial pain**
- * **painful swelling of the neck glands**
- * **painful breathing, wheezing, or shortness of breath**
- * **severe headache**
- * **fever greater than 100.5° F. for more than two (2) days**
- * **white patches on the back of your throat or tonsils**
- * **difficulty swallowing even water**

You should notify your health care provider if your usual medications are not working. If you have had a recent negative throat culture but the sore throat symptoms have not improved after 2-3 days, you should return to be seen.

Prevention

Wash your hands frequently.

Contrary to popular belief, colds are not primarily spread through coughing or sneezing. Most viruses are spread **hand-to-hand**.

You may be exposed to the virus by contact with someone who has it even if they do not show symptoms. You can contract the virus by touching hands, or by touching a hard nonporous object like a telephone or doorknob shortly after an infected person touched it. If you touch your eyes or nose, you have just exposed yourself to the virus.

OTHER THINGS TO DO:

- Use disposable tissues
- Eat a balanced diet
- Avoid prolonged contact with ill persons
- Add humidity to your living space
- Keep your stress level down
- Increase your Vitamin C - by eating more fruits juices, vegetables or taking a multivitamin daily.
- **Don't smoke** - this is your greatest risk factor. It irritates your nasal passages and increases your risk of getting bronchitis or pneumonia

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Upper Respiratory Infections



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