

## Colds

Coughs, colds, and runny noses can make you feel miserable but in general are not serious. They are usually caused by viruses and get better with time and rest. Unless there is a complicating factor, antibiotics will not help, and in fact may do more harm than good.

Antibiotics are only effective against bacterial illnesses. Almost all upper respiratory illnesses are viral in nature. Antibiotics given in this situation will not speed recovery and can cause undue side effects or complications. They can allow bacteria to build up resistance, people can become allergic to them, and there are a few significant complications caused by antibiotic drugs.

Viral upper respiratory infections including colds and flu usually includes symptoms such as runny or stuffy nose, cough, sore throat, sneezing, watery eyes, headaches, body aches, fever, chills, and fatigue. These symptoms usually last about a week. If these symptoms go on for more than 14 days we recommended visit.

Sore throats can be a worry, but unaccompanied by other typical signs of an upper respiratory tract infection they can usually be watched. If they are the primary symptom and are accompanied only by fever, swollen glands, headache, or abdominal pain, we usually recommend a throat culture.

Coughing is usually a part of a viral upper respiratory tract infection. It generally is worse in those who have underlying asthma. Most cough suppressants, even prescription cough suppressants, are only modestly effective at reducing cough. Young children with marked or persistent cough need to be seen.

Thick mucus that is either yellow or green can be a part of the recovery process. The presence of purulent mucus by itself does not necessarily mean and antibiotic are required. If after 10 to 14 days the illness does not seem to be beginning to resolve, you should be seen.

There are some things that do help relieve the symptoms of a cold. Resting and drinking plenty of fluid is very important. Humidification sometimes makes to person feels somewhat better. Sometimes one will feel better after propping himself up with an extra pillow. Some over-the-counter medications also helpful. A fever or pain reducer such as Tylenol or ibuprofen is appropriate. Aspirin needs to be avoided in children. A decongestant will sometimes help with the stuffy nose. Cough suppressants usually are not very effective.

Try to avoid becoming ill by washing her hands often, avoiding large crowds, getting a flu shot every year, and don't smoke.

While most coughs and colds resolve on their own with time, you should call us if you have fever for more than two days, cough that makes it difficult to eat or sleep, wheezing, chest pains, prolonged cough, severe sore throat, trouble swallowing, or shortness of breath.