

## Colds and Sinusitis

### What is it?

The common cold is an upper respiratory infection caused by one of over 300 viruses.

Cold viruses enter the body through contact with fluid from the eyes, nose or throat of an infected person. Colds can occur throughout the year but are most common in the late winter and early spring.

A cold usually lasts about 1 or 2 weeks.

### What are the symptoms?

- General fatigue/body aches
- Headache/ Head congestion
- Sore throat
- Fever
- Dry cough

### Home Treatment

You must be prepared to let colds run their course. **Viruses do not respond to antibiotics.** There are some things you can do to feel better and help prevent the spread of infection.

- **Rest:** Your body needs its strength to fight the virus. Do not tire yourself unnecessarily.
- **Fluids:** Drink plenty of high calorie fluids. (i.e.soda, juice) Solid foods may be bypassed if you do not feel like eating.
- **Avoid Smoke:** Smoke irritates the mucus lining of the nose and throat and can worsen symptoms.
- **Increase Humidity** to reduce nasal stuffiness. If you do not have a humidifier or vaporizer, try sitting in a steamy bathroom with a hot running shower for 15 minutes.
- **WASH Hands Frequently**

### Treating the symptoms

**Medications** (nonprescription) can be helpful in relieving discomfort of cold symptoms. *Use generic brand medication in order to save money.*

**Acetaminophen** (Tylenol) or **Ibuprofen** (Advil) every 4-6 hours reduces muscular aches and headaches and fever.

**Cough Syrups** can be used to relieve cough discomfort. **Expectorants** help you loosen and cough up secretions (water is also an excellent expectorant).

**Suppressants** help quiet coughs but should be for dry, hacking coughs that prevent sleep. **Decongestants** (oral) relieve stuffiness by promoting nasal drainage. Nasal sprays provide fast relief from stuffiness but should be used no more than 4 days to avoid the "rebound effect" of increased congestion.

**Cough drops** provide moisture and ease coughing. Many contain suppressants so check the label. **Throat lozenges** provide temporary relief from sore throats. Look for ingredients that contain phenol or end in "caine".

- Always check with your MD or Pharmacist before taking Over the Counter Meds if you also take prescription meds.

**Sinus Blockage:** Sinuses have poor drainage and can be treated with home treatment. This can occur as a response to allergens as well as a cold. Call us at (757) 594-7661 or email [uhws@cnu.edu](mailto:uhws@cnu.edu) for more information.

### **For Congestion:**

The most important thing to remember is, to prevent bacterial growth, ***keep it running*** ! You can do this by using:

- a decongestant like Sudafed  
Follow package directions. Side effects may include hypertension and sleep impairment. (Use during the day until side effects are determined.)
- a cough expectorant & suppressant like Robitussin DM to liquefy mucus in head and chest and to prevent or stop cough. Use this three times a day.
- PLAIN salt-water nasal spray to rehydrate and sooth mucus membranes. It will also aid in the sinus drainage of thick mucus.
- Breath steam from a sink, or personal steam inhaler, shower, or bowl
- an antihistamine like Benadryl, **at bedtime only**, to prevent postnasal drip that can cause sore throat and cough.
- **Stop taking any other cold medicines if using the above home treatment plan.**

**Prevention** : Keep up your resistance to infection by eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of rest, and exercising regularly.

Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough and wash your hands frequently. Properly dispose of used facial tissues.

**The cold virus can stay alive and contagious outside the body for 2-3 hrs—the flu virus for 72 hrs.!**

## When to Call the Doctor

- If symptoms last longer than 1-2 weeks without improving.
- If symptoms get worse or new ones appear (fever, productive cough, shortness of breath, earache, ect)
- If you are uncertain of what to do.

**For questions or concerns after hours please call 594-2000 and ask for Ask-A-Nurse.**