

Common Cold

DESCRIPTION

Common colds are upper respiratory infections caused by viral infections of the nose, mouth, sinuses, ears, throat and voice box.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Runny nose (drainage may be watery or thick)
- Stuffy head
- Sneezing
- Watery eyes
- Mild or no sore throat
- Cough.

CAUSES

Various viruses at different seasons including rhinovirus, adenovirus and coronavirus can cause colds.

RISK FACTORS

- Cigarette smoking
- Large crowds.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid individuals who are coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands often, especially when you are around individuals with colds
- Keep your hands away from your nose, mouth and eyes.

TREATMENT

- Rest as much as you need
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Use a clean, disposable tissue rather than a handkerchief to blow and wipe your nose and to cover your mouth while coughing.

MEDICATION

- There is no cure for the common cold
- Antibiotics are not helpful
- For minor discomfort, you may use a nonprescription drug, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- Decongestants, like Sudafed , may be taken for sinus congestion. A common side effect is difficulty sleeping and increased blood pressure
- Medicated nose sprays (Afrin® or Neo-Synephrine®) may be used by people with high blood pressure; however, these products should only be used for less than 3 days
- Saline nasal sprays may be helpful to promote drainage
- For a dry cough, use a cough suppressant (dextromethorphan) such as Delsym

- For a productive cough, use a cough expectorant (guaifenesin) such as Robitussin
- Many over-the-counter medications contain more than one ingredient; ask your pharmacist to recommend medications for your specific symptoms.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The typical viral infection can last one to two weeks. Antibiotics do not shorten the time or make the symptoms better.

CONSIDER NOTIFYING YOUR PHYSICIAN IF YOU DEVELOP:

- Fever over 102 degrees Fahrenheit
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain
- White or yellow spots in your throat
- Cough that lasts over 10 days
- Neck glands that become large and tender
- Stiff neck
- Earache or headache
- Rash.