

## DESCRIPTION

A contagious viral infection of the upper-respiratory passages including the nose, throat, and sinuses. A cold may also affect the ears and lungs. Colds are caused by any of at least 100 viruses and are the most common disease in the world.

## FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Stuffy or runny nose. Nasal discharge may be watery at first, becoming thick and yellow or green.
- Throat feels scratchy or sore.
- Coughing and sneezing.
- Loss of voice.
- Mild headache or mild facial pain.
- Fatigue.
- Low-grade fever.
- Watering eyes.

Cold symptoms start slowly. Flu symptoms are more sudden and include higher fever, major aches, chills, sweats, weakness, possible severe sore throat, cough, and chest discomfort.

## PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- To prevent spreading a cold to others, avoid contact when possible during the contagious phase (first 2 to 4 days).
- Wash hands frequently, especially after blowing your nose or before handling food.
- Avoid crowded places when possible, especially during the winter.
- Eat a well-balanced, healthy diet. Include plenty of citrus fruits and other sources of vitamin C.

## GENERAL MEASURES

- Self-care and time is usually all that is needed for a cold. There is no cure for a cold. There are many remedies for cold symptoms. They include nonprescription cold medications, getting extra rest and drinking plenty of fluids.
- To help relieve nasal congestion, use salt-water drops (1/2 teaspoon of salt to 1 cup of warm water). Put 2 or 3 drops of salt solution into each nostril.
- Don't smoke. It can further irritate the nasal passages.
- For a baby too young to blow his or her nose, use an infant nasal aspirator. If mucus is thick and sticky, loosen it by putting 2 or 3 drops of saline solution into each nostril. Don't insert cotton swabs into a child's nostrils.
- Humidifiers and warm showers particularly at night.

## MEDICATIONS

Although there are no medications that can cure a cold, the following over-the-counter medications may offer some symptomatic relief:

- Decongestant
- Antihistamine
- Cough Suppressant (such as Dextromethorphan)
- Expectorant (such as Guaifenesin)
- Nasal decongestant spray (Limit use to 3 days in a row)
- Saline nasal spray or nose drops
- Throat lozenges
- For a stubborn fever, acetaminophen and ibuprofen may be alternated every 3 hours. Do NOT give aspirin to a child.
- Antibiotics and steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic or steroid prescription.
- If you take other medications, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about possible drug interactions.

## SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- You have increased throat pain, or white or yellow spots on the tonsils or other parts of the throat.
- You have long coughing episodes. Your cough produces thick, yellow-green or gray sputum. You have a cough that lasts longer than 10 days.
- A fever lasts several days, or is over 101°F (38.3°C).
- You have chills, chest pain, or shortness of breath.
- You develop a painful earache or severe headache.
- You develop a skin rash or bruised skin.
- You feel pain in the teeth or over the sinuses.
- You develop enlarged, tender glands in the neck.
- Infant with a cold is unable to bottle-feed or breast-feed.