Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (Common Cold)

Respiratory tract infections are most often caused by viruses. They are generally self-limited, but often last for 10-12 days. Coughs related to these infections can last 3-4 weeks. Self-limited infections can be treated without seeing a medical provider and antibiotics are not effective for viral infection.

**Symptoms:**
- Develop slowly over 2-4 days
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Runny nose
- Cough

**Self-care measures:**
- Rest
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids
- Use saline nose drops to loosen mucus
- Use Ibuprofen (Advil®) 600 mg every 6-8 hours or Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) 650 mg every 6 hours as needed to reduce fever or discomfort
- Use Oral Decongestant (Pseudoephedrine) for short-term relief of nasal congestion
- Use Nasal Decongestant (Oxymetazoline) for short-term relief of nasal congestion (do not use for more than 3 days)
- Gargle with salt water and use throat sprays/lozenges for throat pain
- Use heated, humidified air (if you do not have a humidifier, try taking a hot shower)

**Limit spread to others:**
- Wash hands frequently
- Cover coughs and sneezes using the crook of your elbow
- Wear a mask

**When to seek care from a medical provider:**
- Fever over 102 degrees Fahrenheit for more than 3 days
- For symptoms that last over 10 days and are getting worse instead of better
- Shortness of breath/wheezing
- Pain/pressure in your chest
- Severe sinus pain
- Very swollen glands in the neck or jaw
- Significant sore throat lasting more than 1 week