

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