

CURE FOR THE COMMON COLD

(How to Help Our Bodies Heal)

Cold viruses are the cause of most upper respiratory illnesses and are not effectively treated with antibiotics or most over the counter cold remedies. Contrary to popular belief, even illnesses that result in discolored nasal discharge or sputum are usually the result of viruses and will resolve on their own. Our bodies have excellent healing strategies and as long as we do not interfere, we can expect to get well within 10-14 days.

To assist in our recovery we need to rest, drink plenty of fluids and promote sinus drainage. Unfortunately, most over the counter cold remedies may actually hinder our recovery by drying our secretions and retaining thick mucus in our sinuses. This mucus may eventually become infected with bacteria and may then require antibiotic treatment. Our goal is to avoid the use of antibiotics for the common cold because of the **rapidly expanding problem of antibiotic resistance**.

I acknowledge that patients sometimes need a decongestant or multi-symptom cough medicine for especially difficult days but try to follow these directions and **you will likely find that your cold goes away without the need for a doctor's visit**.

Fluids - At least six to eight glasses of fluids per day. More if you feel dry or your lips are cracked.

Hot liquids, orally - Teas, soups etc. may help by inhibiting the reproduction of viruses in your upper respiratory tract. Chicken noodle is my favorite. Wrap up and stay warm.

Nasal saline - Two sprays each nostril as often as necessary to keep nasal passages clear. Remember, your goal is to keep your drainage runny so that your sinuses remain clear. Steamy showers and baths can help as well. For more severe congestion, consider using a **12 hour nasal decongestant** (Afrin) twice a day for three days only. Using nasal decongestants longer can result in rebound and worsening congestion.

Naproxen (Aleve) - Great for fever, body aches, headache and sore throat. 1-2 tablets two times per day, with food. Read the label carefully for contraindications and side effects.

Cough medicine - Use Robitussin DM (or equivalent) or Delsym. Other cough meds usually contain antihistamines and decongestants and cause drying and thickening of mucus. Mucous thinners (Mucinex) can also be helpful.

Supplements - Unfortunately, there is no evidence that vitamin C, zinc containing products, Echinacea or other remedies help at all. They probably don't hurt but I suggest you concentrate on the other six suggestions.

Warning signs: Persistent fever (>4 days), high fever (>102.5), chest pain, shortness of breath, wheezing, severe or unusual headache, or getting worse after 5 days. Please contact us for instructions or go to the nearest emergency room.