Cold and Flu symptoms and treatment

The common cold is one of 200 viruses. The symptoms of a cold may include: runny nose, red eyes, sneezing, sore throat, dry cough, headache and general body aches. There is a gradual 1- or 2-day onset. As the cold progresses, the nasal mucus may thicken. This is the stage just before the cold dries up. A cold usually lasts 1-2 weeks but can often last up to 3 weeks.

Colds occur throughout the year. Antibiotics are not indicated for colds since antibiotics cannot kill viruses. There is no cure for the common cold. If you catch a cold, treat the symptoms and take care of yourself.

**Treatment:**

* Get extra rest. Slow down just a little from your routine. It isn’t necessary to stay home in bed.
* It’s important to stay well hydrated -- drink plenty of liquids. Hot water, tea, chicken soup will help relieve congestion and ease a dry or sore throat. Eat light, easily digested foods.
* Cough drops can soothe an irritated throat. Expensive, medicine-flavored cough drops are not any better than inexpensive, candy-flavored ones or hard candy.
* For a sore throat or postnasal drip, gargle with 1 teaspoon of salt mixed with 8 ounces of hot water, several times a day.
* Take ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) according to package directions to relieve aches and pains. Read labels carefully on combination products, as they may already contain ibuprofen and/or acetaminophen.
* Be alert to multi-symptom cold medications as they often contain acetaminophen or other active ingredients which may result in duplicating medication and unpleasant side effects.
* Take hot showers to relieve nasal stuffiness and ease body aches.

**When to call a Health Care Professional:**

The following signs may be an indication of a developing bacterial infection:

Fever and chills

Labored, shallow, rapid breathing with shortness of breath

Sinus or jaw pain, neck stiffness, severe headache

Cough that lingers for more than 7 – 10 days after other symptoms have cleared, particularly if it produces mucus. (It can be normal for a dry, hacking cough to last several weeks after a cold.)
Sore Throat and Strep Throat:

Most sore throats are caused by viruses and may occur with a cold or may follow a cold.

Strep throat is a sore throat caused by a bacterial infection. Strep throat is most common in children from 3 – 15 years of age.

In general, the more cold-like your symptoms are, the less likely it is that you have strep throat.

Symptoms of strep throat:

- Severe and sudden onset sore throat
- Fever
- Swollen lymph nodes in the neck
- White or yellow coating (spots) on the tonsils

Coughs:

Coughing is the body’s way of removing mucus from the lungs.

Productive coughs produce mucus that comes up from the lungs. This kind of cough generally should not be suppressed. It is needed to clear mucus from the lungs.

Non-Productive coughs are dry coughs that do not produce mucus. A dry, hacking cough may develop toward the end of a cold. Dry coughs that follow a cold may last up to several weeks and often get worse at night.

Over-the-counter cough syrups may help. Do not take anyone else’s prescription cough medicine.

Seek medical attention if you develop difficulty breathing or chest discomfort in association with your cough.

Fever:

A fever is a high body temperature. It is a symptom, not a disease. A fever is one way your body fights illness. If you think you have a fever measure your temperature with a thermometer. These are available in the vending pharmacy.

- Hydrate well! You are drinking enough if you are urinating more often than usual.
- Monitor your temperature.
- Take ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) according to the package directions. We typically recommend ibuprofen 400 – 600 mg every 6 hours (maximum dose 2400 mg in 24 hours) or acetaminophen 650 mg every 4 to 6 hours.
- Eat light, easily digested foods.

Influenza (Flu):

Influenza, or flu, is a viral illness that commonly occurs in the winter. Flu is not the same as the common cold – the symptoms of flu are usually more severe and come on quite suddenly. Symptoms may include fever (101 – 104 degrees), shaking chills, body aches, muscle pain, headache, pain when you move your eyes, fatigue, weakness and runny nose. Symptoms may last up to 10 days. Although a normally healthy person with the flu feels very sick, the illness seldom leads
to more serious complications. If you have underlying medical conditions it is important that you seek early diagnosis and treatment if you think you have the flu.

**Laryngitis:**

Laryngitis is an irritation of the voice box. The most common cause is a viral infection such as a cold. Symptoms may include hoarseness or loss of voice, the urge to clear your throat, fever, tiredness, throat pain, and cough.

Medication does little to speed recovery. Duration is typically 5 – 10 days.

Rest your voice. Talk as little as possible. Don’t shout or whisper and avoid clearing your throat.

During the terms, the Dick’s House nurses are available 24/7 to counsel, triage and assess your concerns.

Please call (603) 646-9440.

To schedule an appointment with a clinician, please use our web-book appointment system, available thru the Health Services link on your Banner page or thru our website: [www.dartmouth.edu/~health](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~health).

Please call the Appointment Office at (603) 646-9401 if you would like to schedule by phone, or if you have additional questions or concerns.