



## Common Cold

The common cold is an infection caused by a virus that affects your respiratory system, including nose, ears, throat and lungs. There are over 200 different types of viruses that can cause this, but as you age you can develop immunities to some of these. The cold symptoms can be passed by one another by handling objects that have been contaminated or by a person coughing or sneezing or personal contact. You are more likely to get a cold if you:

- Are emotionally or physically stressed
- Are tired
- Do not eat healthy
- Are a smoker or exposed to secondhand smoke
- Live or work in crowded conditions

You can develop symptoms within 2-3 days from exposure. Symptoms may include:

- Scratchy/sore throat
- Sneezing, runny or stuffy nose
- Coughing
- Watery eyes
- Ear congestion
- Slight fever 99-101degrees F (37.2-37.8 degrees C)
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Loss of appetite

Influenza varies from the common cold by symptoms developing faster and being more severe.

There is no quick fix to the common cold but here are a few things that could help it make the symptoms last less:

- **Rest**
- Increase your fluids, such as teas, juices, water.
- Frequent good hand washing.
- Good Respiratory Etiquette (cover your mouth and nose always when sneezing or coughing and then washing your hands!).
- Avoid close contact with people who have colds.
- Use paper cups and towels in the bathrooms.
- **DON'T SMOKE!**

Over the counter medications can help. Be sure to read the label and treat only the symptoms you have. Do not buy a multi-symptom cold product that has a cough preparation when you are not coughing. Some of the medications you may like to try are:

- Saline nasal spray to help moist the nasal passages.
- Pain killers such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol), Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), or Naproxen (Aleve). But be careful of NSAIDS (Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) like Ibuprofen and naproxen, they can be hard on the stomach.
- Decongestants like pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) help unstuff the nose.
- Cough prep like Guaifenesin (Robitussin, Mucinex) loosens secretions so they can be coughed up and out.
- Cough drops, lozenges or Vitamin C drops to keep throat moist and decrease the cough.

Come to the health center during Doctors hours (Mon-Fri 8:00-8:45) or seek Urgent Care if you have:

- Worsening ear pain
- A cough that is worsening or painful, trouble breathing, wheezing or shortness of breath or your lips, skin or nails look bluish
- Chest pain
- Worsening sore throat, white spots in your throat or increase in swelling or lymph glands (front of throat)
- Temperature > 101.5 degrees F (38.6 degrees C) or higher that lasts > 2 days. This may be accompanied by body chills and sweats.
- Headache that last several days
- Skin rash
- Confusion