

Managing Symptoms of Upper Respiratory Infections (URI) for Adults

You can expect the symptoms of your cold or upper respiratory infection to last 14 to 21 days. A dry hacking cough may continue up to three or four weeks. To help you recover:

- Drink more fluids.
- Get enough rest.
- Use a humidifier or increase time in a steamy shower.

Keep in mind that green or yellow secretion do not equal bacterial infection.

Additional recommendations for managing your symptoms:

Fever, headache, or pain

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol™) 325 mg 2 tablets every 6 hours as needed for the first 5-7 days of infection.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol™) 500 mg, 2 tablets every 8 hours as needed for the first 5-7 days of infection.
 - Maximum dose: 3000 mg of acetaminophen in 24 hours.
 - Avoid combination products that contain acetaminophen (read the label) while taking scheduled acetaminophen.
 - Use lowest effective dose for the shortest possible duration to reduce the risk of serious adverse effects.
- Ibuprofen (Advil™, Motrin™) 200 mg, 3 tablets every 6 hours-8 hours.
 - Avoid ibuprofen if you have kidney disease, coronary heart disease, heart failure, or history of a gastric ulcer or gastric surgery
 - Maximum dose: 2400 mg of ibuprofen in 24 hours.
 - Use lowest needed dose for the shortest possible time frame to reduce the risk of serious side effects. Do not use longer than 7 days, unless directed by your health care provider.
 - Take with food to prevent getting an upset stomach.

Sore throat

- Take acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen as above.
- Use throat lozenges with benzocaine which help numb your sore throat (Cepacol®, chloraseptic brands).
- Gargle with saltwater several times a day to help relieve throat pain. Mix 1/4 teaspoon (1.4 grams) of table salt in 8 ounces (237 milliliters) of warm water. Gargle the solution and then spit it out.

Sinus drainage, sinus/nose/ear congestion

(nose drainage, drainage in the back of the throat, sinus pressure, facial pain, nose stuffiness, ear pressure)

It is common to have nasal drainage of various colors with a viral cold or upper respiratory infection. These usually get better with time and do not require antibiotics.

- Saline sinus rinse – Mix and use according to directions on the product (NeilMed®, XClear®).
- Nasal spray (Flonase®, Nasacort®) - 2 sprays per nostril once a day after a saline sinus irrigation.
- Oxymetazoline nasal spray (Afrin®, Sinex®)
 - Take two or three times a day for 3 days.
 - Do not use longer than 5 days. After 5 days, use saline nasal spray or the saline sinus rinse
- Sudafed (pseudoephedrine) capsules - Take every 4 to 6 hours per package instructions for sinus congestion. Available behind the pharmacy counter.
 - Avoid if you have high blood pressure, heart disease or take beta blockers (atenolol, metoprolol, etc).

- Do not exceed 240 mg per day.
- Longer acting medications may have more side effects such as restlessness and insomnia.

Cough

Avoid coughing too hard or too often. Excessive coughing may cause bronchial (tubes going to the lungs) irritation which could cause a cough-irritate-cough cycle that can prolong the cough for weeks.

- Honey - 1 to 2 teaspoons every 4 to 6 hours as needed.
- Cough drops every 4 to 6 hours as needed.
- Guaifenesin/dextromethorphan syrup - (Robitussin DM®) per package instructions. Do not take if you are taking an antidepressant, opioid pain medication, sleeping medication, or antipsychotic medication.