



Symptom Relief for Colds and Viral Infections

During cold and flu season, most colds, sore throats, runny noses, and fatigue are caused by viruses. Antibiotics are not helpful in treating these conditions because they are viruses that spread in a different way than bacteria, making antibiotics ineffective. Many times, viruses just need to run their course, but supportive treatments such as over-the-counter medications, with the approval of your clinician, rest and staying hydrated can help you feel better. Remember to wash your hands often to avoid spreading illness.

Specific symptoms	Home remedies	Over-the-counter medications
Stuffy nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay hydrated with warm liquids• Saline nasal spray or nasal flushes	Decongestant: opens up the nasal passages
Runny nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For sore nose, use petroleum jelly	Antihistamine: dries up mucus
Dry cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gargle with warm salt water	Cough suppressant: helps stop cough
Moist cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink more water	Expectorant: thins mucus, makes it easier to cough up
Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gargle with warm salt water• Drink tea	
Fever / muscle aches or ear ache	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cool compress on the forehead for fever• Warm compress on sore muscles or ear	Analgesic: pain reliever *Do not give aspirin to children under 18 years old
Itchy, watery eyes/sneezing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid things you are allergic to or that cause irritation	Antihistamine: dries watery eyes and may relieve itchy eyes

Treatments above for adults only.

Medication recommendations:

Medications can help your symptoms and get you back on your feet. Your clinician suggests the following medications:

- ☐ **A prescription inhaler** for wheezing, which will help open up your airways and breathe easier.
- ☐ A prescription for an **inhaled steroid inhaler**, which can help with airway swelling and wheezing.
- ☐ **Acetaminophen** (Tylenol®) for pain, inflammation and to lower fever.
- ☐ **Ibuprofen** for pain and discomfort, inflammation, and fever if greater than 101°F.
Take the following dose: _____
- ☐ **Cough or cold medications** if older than 4-6 years old for relief from a cold.
Take the following dose: _____
- ☐ **Decongestants** (pseudoephedrine) including Sudafed® and others shrink swollen blood vessels and tissues and relieve congestion.
- ☐ **Antihistamine** (Benadryl®, Claritin®, Zyrtec®) to relieve runny nose, sneezing, itchy or watery eyes, and nose or throat itching (may cause sleepiness).
- ☐ **Guaifenesin** (such as Robitussin®, Mucofen®, Mucinex®, Humibid LA® or Humibid-e®) to help thin the mucus and help it drain. Take the following dose: _____
- ☐ **Dextromethorphan** for a cough suppressant, including Delsym® and Robitussin®. Nasal Steroids (such as Flonase(R)) to relieve a runny nose or sinus pressure.

Go back to your doctor if you have:

- Fever higher than 100.4 °F and if it stays up despite using fever reducing medications like Tylenol and Ibuprofen
- Cough with bloody mucus
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Symptoms that last more than 3 weeks

References:

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4. Krames LLC. (2024). Adult self-care for colds. Ignite On-Demand. Retrieved July 16, 2024 from <https://www.kramesondemand.com/Healthsheet.aspx?id=82147&ContentTypeId=3>
5. Bailey, L. (November 2023). Acute bronchitis. Family Doctor. Retrieved July 16, 2024 from <https://familydoctor.org/condition/acute-bronchitis/>