

ADVICE FOR SELF CARE OF COLDS, COUGHS AND SORE THROATS

Most of the infections that cause runny noses, coughs and sore throats are viral and therefore NOT helped by use of penicillin, Z-Pak or other powerful antibiotics available by prescription. When you get colds, coughs and sore throats, we recommend taking the following measures:

- **Get adequate rest.** Most of us need 8-9 hours per night normally and usually an extra hour when fighting an infection. The reason we get sick is sometimes from lack of consistent adequate sleep.
- **Drink extra fluids** to thin out secretions in your nose and lungs= 8 glasses/day. Water, herbal, green or black teas, chicken soup all work. Avoid soda, alcohol and dairy products while ill. .
- **For nasal congestion:** You can buy over the counter (otc) salt water nose spray, such as Sinus Rinse to thin nasal drainage and relieve congestion. If you prefer, you can make your own solution. Use ¼ tsp salt in 4 oz of room temperature tap water and use a medicine dropper, rubber bulb syringe or netty pot to irrigate each nostril. You can buy OTC oxymetazoline (Afrin) and use that for a maximum of 3 days to decrease nasal congestion and sinus pressure symptoms. Also, try an over the counter decongestant such as phenylephrine (brand name Sudafed PE) during the day for runny nose or post nasal drip. Sudafed PE can cause jitteriness, nervousness and can interfere with restful sleep, so take only early in the day.
- **For sore throat:** Gargle with warm salt water if suffering throat pain. 2 tsp of salt in 8oz of warm tap water repeated every 1- 2 hours while awake helps reduce the pain. Cepacol lozenges available over the counter may also help with throat pain.
- **For fever, headache, sore throat and body aches:** Take an over the counter pain/fever reducer such as Acetaminophen (brand name Tylenol) in doses of 325mg (2 pills taken every 4 hours with maximum of 8 pills per day) helps reduce these symptoms. Ibuprofen (brand name Advil, Motrin) or Naproxen (brand name Aleve) also work but have a higher risk of stomach irritation.
- **For cough:** Take an over the counter expectorant/cough suppressant such as guaifenesin-DM (brand name Robitussin-DM) which helps reduce cough
- **For trouble sleeping:** Take an over the counter sedating antihistamine such as diphenhydramine at bedtime (brand name Benadryl) which helps dry up nasal secretions and causes drowsiness. This may cause excessive drowsiness the next morning in some sensitive individuals.
- Some people find zinc lozenges, echinacea, vitamin c supplements shorten the duration of symptoms. Although usually harmless, some people experience stomach upset with the 1-2,000 mg doses of Vitamin C, which is acidic.

IF YOUR SYMPTOMS ARE UNUSUALLY SEVERE (fever >102, severe headache, sore throat, face or dental pain), **PROLONGED** (lasting longer than the typical one week cold) **OR INTERFERING WITH YOUR SLEEP, PLEASE COME TO the URGENT CARE CLINIC.** Our hours are MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY, and FRIDAY from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., WEDNESDAY 9:30 a.m. -4:30 p.m., and SATURDAY 8:30 a.m. -11:30 a.m. (during the academic quarters). Patients are seen both by same day appointments and on walk in basis. Wait times are shortest at 8:30 and longest during the 12-2 lunch hours, so plan accordingly.