

Sore Throats, Sneezes, and Sniffles, Oh My!

Common Cold

Colds start with 1-2 days of dry or scratchy throat followed by runny nose, nasal congestion/drainage, and sometimes headaches, cough, fatigue, or low-grade fever (up to 101°). Mucus often gets darker or thicker in the resolution phases (days 7-10). This is normal *as long as you are starting to feel better overall*. Antibiotics do not help colds because they are caused by viruses.

Flu

Flu usually comes on suddenly (as if suddenly hit by a truck) with moderate to high fever (over 101°), chills, dry cough, body aches, and fatigue (can also have runny nose, congestion, sore throat, diarrhea and nausea/vomiting). Flu usually lasts 3-10 days. If your flu test is positive, doctor-prescribed antiviral medication may be recommended for those at risk for complications from flu when given within the first 48 hours.

Allergies

Allergies symptoms occur seasonally or throughout the year, can be daily or off and on, and include clear nasal drainage/congestion, itchy nose or eyes, scratchy throat, and mild to annoying cough *without fever*. Over-the-counter antihistamines (e.g. loratadine, fexofenadine) may prevent or treat symptoms.

Strep Throat

Typical symptoms include severe sore throat, fever, headache, and abdominal pain (and sometimes a bumpy rash). Antibiotic treatment within the first 7-9 days decreases the risk of secondary heart and kidney complications.

Mononucleosis

Most people get mono prior to adulthood but have no symptoms. When symptomatic, mono can cause fever, sore throat, swelling of tonsils and glands in the neck, and persistent fatigue that can last several weeks or more. Antibiotics are not used to treat mono, but establishing a diagnosis (by testing in the office or at a lab) helps guide decisions about treatment of symptoms and activity restrictions necessary to prevent complications (e.g. damage to the spleen).

Sinus Infection

Sinuses can get infected with bacteria after 10-12 days of sinus congestion (usually from ongoing colds, flu, or allergies) leading to thickening yellow/green mucus, pain or pressure in the facial bones over the cheeks or around the eyes, headaches, cough, and sometimes fever. Sinus infections may require treatment with antibiotics.

Asthma

Common cold, flu and sinus infections can bring on or worsen asthma symptoms.

Contact your doctor if you develop a dry, tight cough, especially if you experience wheezing, difficulty breathing, or cough that causes vomiting or wakes you up at night.



Call Girls to Women Health and Wellness at 972-733-6565 ext. 1 to make an **appointment** if you suspect you need evaluation or treatment.

911

See reverse side for symptom relief, when to call your doctor or when to call 911.

What can I do?



Protect yourself

- Wash hands often or use alcohol based sanitizer
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the crook of your arm
- Avoid touching nose, eyes and mouth



Infections spread by contact with infected droplets from person to person (even from surface to person), especially during seasons when people spend more time in close contact with each other in homes, schools, and buildings.

How to feel better

- **Rest**, lots of rest!
- **Drink** enough fluids so that your urine is pale yellow instead of dark yellow
- **Don't Fear the Fever** Treat the patient, not the fever. If the patient is well-hydrated and not too uncomfortable, allow the fever to help the immune system do its job.
- Ibuprofen (Advil™, Motrin™), Naproxen (Aleve™), or Acetaminophen (Tylenol™) for fever, sore throat and muscle aches. NO ASPIRIN products should be taken by a child or teen.

How to reduce nasal congestion (and help prevent a sinus infection)

- Gently blow your nose to clear out mucus.
- Guaifenesin (Mucinex™) thins secretions and helps with coughs when taken with plenty of fluids.
- Oxymetazoline (Afrin™) 1-2 sprays in one nostril once a day as needed helps decrease severe congestion. *Safe to use for only 3-5 days in a row; longer use makes congestion worse, can be habit forming.*
- Rinse nose with saline (e.g.. Simply Saline™, Netti Pot™) frequently to clear secretions. Nasogel™ (OTC saline gel) sprayed in the nose before bedtime to prevent drying and crusting overnight. May use as frequently as needed during the daytime as well.

How to soothe your sore throat

- Drink warm tea with honey
- Gargle with warm salt water
- Gargle 2 teaspoons of liquid Benadryl – then spit without swallowing (may provide pain relief for 4-6 hours)

Call for an appointment (972-733-6565) if you develop...

- dehydration (urination decreasing in frequency or getting very dark, dry mouth, dizziness with position change)
- possible strep, flu, or sinus infection that may require prescription medication
- symptoms that last **more** than 10-12 days without signs of resolving on their own
- cough that gets progressively worse or keeps you up at night
- persistent vomiting



Call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest emergency room if any...

- severe breathing difficulty (shortness of breath with chest tightness or difficulty speaking)
- headache associated with severe neck pain or stiffness (inability to touch chin to shoulders/chest)
- pinpoint red/purple rash that doesn't fade when pressed
- tongue swelling; inability to swallow saliva
- mental status changes (mental confusion or disorientation to place or time)

911