

## Colds, Coughs, & Sore Throats

People frequently suffer from infections that cause symptoms such as cough, runny nose, sinus congestion, sore throat, ear discomfort, and even mild fever or chills.

**These infections are usually caused by a *virus*.**

**Most of the time, even people who think they have “Strep Throat” actually have a *viral* throat infection.**

***The bad news:*** antibiotics do not work on viruses.

***The good news:*** Your body will fight off the virus on its own, usually within 5-10 days.

***Why we should avoid antibiotics when possible:***

- Antibiotics can cause needless side effects, such as rashes, upset stomach, and diarrhea.
- Some people can have serious allergic reactions to antibiotics.
- Overuse of antibiotics leads to bacteria becoming resistant to these antibiotics. This means the antibiotic may not work on future infections when they may be truly needed.

***What you can do:***

- Treatment is focused on making you comfortable while your body fights off the infection.
- Get lots of **rest** and drink plenty of **fluids**.
- Studies show that **Echinacea** can reduce symptoms, if taken at the *onset* of the cold symptoms, and that **Vitamin C** can *prevent* the common cold.
- **Acetaminophen (Tylenol)** and **Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin)** can be taken for fever, chills, discomfort, pain, and muscle aches.
- Throat sprays, such as **Cepacol**, are very good at relieving sore throats. You can simply re-spray as needed.
- **Nasal Saline flushes** or **Neti Pots** are very good at relieving nasal congestion and sinus discomfort.
- Studies show that **Vicks VapoRub** can reduce cough & cold symptoms. Some people even find it helpful to run over their sinus areas.
- All of these treatments are available over-the-counter from the pharmacy. You do not need to see your doctor for a prescription. You can also ask your local pharmacist for other useful products.

***When to see your doctor:***

- Severe or persistent fever.
- If you have trouble breathing – especially if you are a smoker, have chronic bronchitis, emphysema, COPD, asthma, or other lung problems.
- If your symptoms are getting worse after 5-7 days.
- If you are very unwell, or have any other concerning symptoms.