



Howden Medical Clinic

Urgent Care/Family Practice/Cosmetics

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Common Cold

Cause: virus and not bacterial, Cold/ Flu and 90% of sore throats are viral.

Self-limiting

Spread by hand contact with secretions from an infected person (direct or indirect) or aerosol of the secretions and virus.

Incubation period: usually under 2 days

Symptoms peak at 1-3 days and last 7-10 days and occasionally 3 weeks

Symptoms: sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, cough, sneezing, fullness & pain in ears, hoarseness, mild fever and tiredness.

Incidence in a year: 6 in children, 2-3 in adults, 1 in elderly

Risk factors: stress, poor sleep, day care attendance

Prevention: best evidence for hand washing/masks/gloves and zinc supplements (more evidence in kids-zinc sulfate 10-15mg daily), probiotics may be beneficial; no evidence for gargling, Ginseng, exercise, garlic, homeopathy, vitamin C/D, Echinacea (Vitamin C may benefit people under physical stress like marathon runners or soldiers in subarctic environment).

Treatment: There is no known cure for virus infections and antibiotics do not help unless the patient has ear infection, strep throat or sinus infections. Best evidence for ibuprofen(Advil, Motrin) or Tylenol(Acetaminophen) for fever and pain, antihistamine/decongestant combination medications in ages older than 6 years (some benefit in adults for dextromethorphan-containing meds-no benefit with codeine or guaifenesin) and intra-nasal ipratropium for runny nose, zinc supplements in adults(zinc gluconate lozenge), honey at bedtime in kids over one year, no benefit with antibiotics, vapour rub, Ginseng, Echinacea, Vitamin C, nasal irrigation, humidified air, Chinese herbal medicine, garlic, or probiotics. Using no antibiotics is therefore safer and your infection will get just as better quickly.



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Other Recommendations

- Drink lots of fluids especially fruit juices and tea.
- You may be coughing more frequently when lying down because the mucus from your nose is dripping back down into your throat.
- Sleeping on extra pillows so that you are almost sitting up may help.
- Salt water gargles (1/4 tsp of salt in one cup of warm water) or Tantum rinse (by prescription) for sore throat
- For sore throat, warm liquids (like tea with lemon and honey) are helpful. Throat lozenges (e.g. Strepsil, Cepacol, and Halls) sprays (e.g. Chloraseptic) may also make the throat feel better. In addition, medicine for fever or pain can be helpful.
- Humidifier to moisten the air.
- Nasal saline rinse (over the counter) loosens the nasal secretions.
- Nasal steroid spray (by prescription) can help post-nasal drips.
- See your physician if you get much worse, a new ear ache, worsening cough or trouble breathing, anything that worries you, a new or high fever.
- Go to nearest Emergency Department if you develop shortness of breath, chest pain, progressively worsening symptoms, severe headache or vomiting.