

# The Common Cold

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Colds are viral infections of the nose, throat, airway & lungs. These infections may last for about 3 – 7 days, although many people continue to have symptoms (coughing, sneezing, congestion) for up to 2 weeks. Most people get an average of two to four colds per year.

Colds are contagious for the first 2 – 3 days. They are spread by inhaling droplets that contain the cold virus or by touching surfaces that are contaminated with the droplets (ie: doorknobs, desks, countertops).

The most common symptoms of the common cold are:

- Runny, stuffy nose, sneezing
- Congestion
- Cough
- Sore, scratchy throat
- Tender lymph nodes in neck
- Post nasal drip
- Decreased appetite
- Headache

Treatment:

- Congestion – decongestants (Sudafed), remember to request this from the pharmacist
- Aches – Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Advil (Ibuprofen)
- Cough – Dextromethorphan (Robitussin DM)
- Sore Throat – Lozenges, gargle with warm salt water
- Drink plenty of fluids – avoid sharing drinking glasses, water bottles, or eating utensils
- Rest

REMEMBER to follow dosage instructions on all product labels and know what is in the medication you are taking.

Colds are self-limiting and treatment is directed at symptoms relief. Because a cold is caused by a virus, antibiotics are not indicated.

Prevention:

- Good handwashing – wet with soap and water & rubbed together for 15-30 seconds
- Alcohol based hand rubs if a sink and water are not available
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth
- Cover cough & sneezes by doing so into sleeve of one's own clothing

Return to your Healthcare Practitioner if your symptoms worsen or persist greater than 5 to 7 days.

Sources and/or additional resources:

Web MD: <http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/default.htm>

Family Doctor.org: <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/colds-and-the-flu.html>

Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/basics/definition/con-20019062>

If you are a registered Millersville University student and you have questions or you need to make an appointment, please call Millersville University Health Services at 871-5250.