



Over-the-counter medications for upper respiratory infection

The doctor has diagnosed you or your child with upper respiratory infection, also known as the common cold.

Symptoms may include:

- Stuffy or runny nose
- Body aches
- Sneezing
- Mild, hacking cough
- Scratchy, tickly, or sore throat
- Watery eyes
- Headache
- Low grade fever (under 100.4°F)
- Thick, yellow or green nasal drainage
- Fatigue

Upper respiratory infections are viruses. Antibiotics will not help you feel better sooner or avoid spreading the virus to others. To help with other symptoms, try:

- Saline nasal spray to thin nasal drainage
- Avoid smoking or being around smokers
- Drink fluids, but avoid caffeine (water is nature's best way to clear mucus)
- Use a bulb syringe to help children remove mucus
- Place a cool mist humidifier in the room

Over-the-counter medication recommendations:

Medications can help relieve symptoms to get you back on your feet. Your provider suggests the following medications:

- Acetaminophen** (Tylenol®) for pain and to lower fever. Take the following dose: _____
- Ibuprofen** for pain and discomfort, inflammation, or fever if greater than 101°F.
Take the following dose: _____
- Antihistamine** to relieve runny nose, sneezing, itchy or watery eyes, and nose or throat itching (may cause sleepiness). Take the following dose: _____
- Decongestants** (pseudoephedrine) including Sudafed® and others shrink swollen blood vessels and tissues and relieves congestion. Take the following dose: _____
- Expectorants** (guaifenesin) to help thin mucus so it will drain easier. Includes Mucofen®, Mucinex®, Humibid LA® or Humibid-e®. Take the following dose: _____
- Cough suppressant** (dextromethorphan) to help relieve coughing. Includes Delsym® and Robitussin®. Take the following dose: _____

Watch for:

- Ear infections
 - o Adults: Earaches (sharp or dull pain), muffled hearing or fullness in the ear, ear drainage
 - o Children: Tugging at the ear, ear drainage, fever, irritability, restlessness, decreased appetite, crying when lying down
- Sinus infections
 - o Pain or tenderness of the face, sinuses, back of the eyes, ear, or forehead
 - o Nasal congestion, distorted sense of smell, itching, loss of smell, runny nose, thick or colored nasal drainage
 - o Fatigue, fever, headache
- Pneumonia
 - o Chest pain when breathing or coughing, coughing up phlegm
 - o Shortness of breath, fatigue, fever, sweating and shaking chills
- Throat infections
 - o Throat pain that comes on quickly, painful swallowing, red and swollen tonsils (sometimes with white streaks or dots)
 - o Fever, headache, nausea or vomiting (especially in younger children), body aches

When to go back to the doctor:

- Fever greater than 100.4°F
- Symptoms lasting more than 10 days
- Symptoms not relieved by over-the-counter medications

References:

1. Johns Hopkins Medicine, hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/pediatrics/upper_respiratory_infection_uri_or_common_cold, 9/25/17.
2. Cleveland Clinic, my.clevelandclinic.org/-/scassets/files/org/head-neck/sinus-resources/4-common-cold.ashx?la=en, 9/25/17
3. Mayo Clinic, mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions, 9/17/18