

HEALTH TOPICS

Colds (Upper Respiratory Infections)

Overview

- Colds or URIs (Upper Respiratory Infections) are minor infections of the mucous membranes of the nose, sinuses and throat caused by many different viruses. There are several hundred cold viruses, the most common one being rhinovirus.
- Unfortunately, there is no cure for a cold or URI. Treatment is aimed at reducing the intensity of the symptoms, making you more comfortable and hopefully preventing complications.

Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms develop 1-3 days after a cold virus enters the body. They will usually last a few days but may last up to 2 - 3 weeks and can include;

- Runny nose
- Head congestion including the ears, nose, sinuses, throat & upper chest
- Sneezing
- Sore or scratchy throat
- Cough
- Headache and other body aches
- Low grade fever
- Fatigue
- Diminished sense of taste and smell

Prevention

- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Keep your hands away from your nose, eyes and mouth
- Keep your distance from people with illnesses
- Get regular exercise
- Eat well
- Get adequate rest
- Reduce stress
- No smoking. Smoking lowers resistance to all respiratory infections

Treatment

Antibiotic medications do not cure viral infections and can be harmful if taken when not needed. Recommendations listed below will relieve your symptoms while your body's own immune system is defeating the virus.

- Drink extra liquids, hot liquids such as teas or soups may feel more comfortable for sore throats and help with nasal secretions and facilitate drainage
- Rest, stay close to home
- Saline nasal spray & steam therapy (sit in a steamy shower/bath) to relieve congestion

- Use hard candies or cough drops to soothe dry, sore throat as well as help reduce coughing
- Gargle with warm salt water (½ tsp salt in an average size glass water) to soothe a sore throat
- Avoid smoking, caffeine and alcohol
- Selectively choose over-the-counter medications if you need symptomatic relief for your most bothersome symptom(s). Use for short term and always read and follow the dosing directions on the package:
 - **Acetaminophen or ibuprofen** for body aches, headache, sore throat and fever
 - **Decongestant** for congestion
 - **Cough medication** for cough
 - **Medicated lozenges** (e.g. menthol/eucalyptus) and throat sprays for sore throat
 - **Anti-histamines** may be helpful for runny nose & post-nasal drip in allergy prone individuals

How We Can Help

- If you would like to be seen by our medical staff, you can book an appointment [online](#) or call our Appointment Desk (805) 893-371, or come into Student Health.
- Also, our [Advice Nurse services](#) are free for all UCSB students to discuss health concerns and the options for medical care.
- [Over the counter \(OTC\) products](#) to control the cold-related symptoms are available for purchase at our Pharmacy, which is located in the lobby of UCSB Student Health Service.

Recommended Resources

- Common Cold (mayo Clinic) <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/basics/definition/con-20019062>
- Common Cold (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/uri/colds.html>
- Colds (Up-to-Date) <http://www.uptodate.com/contents/the-common-cold-in-adults-beyond-the-basics>