

Rx

You have been diagnosed with a viral illness. Viruses cause the great majority of respiratory infections ("colds," sinusitis, bronchitis, and sore throats), as opposed to bacteria, which are much less common.

Bacteria are living creatures, with cells very different from ours, so it is easy to make 'antibiotics' which kill bacteria yet spare humans. Unfortunately, antibiotics do nothing against viruses, which hide inside your cells. If antibiotics are given when not needed, they increase resistance and can be harmful to you.

Instead, you must rely on time and your own immune system to clear a viral infection. In the meantime, the treatments below will help relieve your symptoms.

General Instructions:

- Use medicines as directed, and stop them when your symptoms get better.
- Ask your pharmacist for generic (in *italics* below) or store-brands with the same ingredients that cost less than name brands.
- Try to find single-ingredient medicines: they are cheaper, have less side-effects, and allow you to target your symptoms with less medications.
- Increase fluids to more than 2 liters (equal to a large soda bottle) a day. This is probably the best thing you can do to loosen secretions and help your body fight infection.

Fever & Aches:

For aches and discomfort you may take (simultaneously):

- *ibuprofen* (Advil or Motrin) 200 mg, 2 – 3 every 8 hours (max 3200mg/day) Reduces fever, pain AND inflammation. Watch out for stomach upset or GI bleeding
- *acetaminophen* (Tylenol) 500 mg, 2 every 6 hours (max 4000mg/day) Reduces fever and pain.

Congestion & Sinus Pressure:

- Use cool-mist vaporizer, or saline nasal spray to relieve congestion
- Try *guaifenesin* to make secretions more productive, or alternately *pseudoephedrine* 30 mg tabs , 1 – 2 every 4 - 6 hours to dry you up
- *oxymetazoline* (Afrin) nasal spray, 2 sprays each nostril twice a day for 3 days only. Longer use may make you nose dependent on the medicine to be open
- Sit in a steamy shower, or apply warm, moist compresses

Sore Throat:

- Soothe with ice-chips, throat spray (i.e., Chloraseptic), lozenges, or warm salt-water gargles.
- Severe sore throat can also be eased with a 50:50 mixture of liquid Benadryl and Maalox- gargle and spit (do not swallow)

Cough:

- In general, don't suppress a productive cough. *Guaifenesin* (Mucinex, Robitussin PE) with lots of fluids can make secretions thinner and more productive, allowing you to clear them more easily. Also try sitting in a steamy shower to loosen chest or throat congestion
- A dry tickly cough, or a productive cough keeping you awake at night, may be worth trying to suppress. Try *dextromethorphan* cough syrup (Delsym) or gels (Robitussin Cough Gels)

Other:

- *Zinc* lozenges or sprays (Zicam) used every 4 hours from the onset of a cold can reduce duration by 1 - 2 days
- *Vitamin C* 500mg daily may similarly reduce your illness by 1 to 2 days

Follow Up:

Please call the office for a recheck if not improved in 7 to 10 days; or if new symptoms develop such as high fever, shortness of breath, focal pain or pressure, or mental status changes.