

The common cold is a respiratory infection which is very contagious usually caused by a virus. It is characterised by a slight fever, streaming nasal passage, sore throat and aching joints.

### What to look for

- general 'unwell' feeling at first and aching joints
- head and chest congestion, a runny nose.
- sore throat.
- Sneezing.
- dry cough that may occur only at night.
- chills.
- burning, watery eyes.
- all over, vague achiness.
- Headache.
- fatigue.

The common cold is caused by infection from one of many different viruses. A virus attaches itself to the lining of your nasal passages or throat. The body temperature then usually goes up within the next few days.

It usually takes between one and four days to get the symptoms of a cold once you have been infected and then the cold itself can last for about 4 days to a week. It is important to be very careful during the first three days that you have symptoms, as this is the time that you are likely to pass on the cold to others.

Getting a cold is not generally dangerous in normal healthy individuals. They usually go away in a week or so without any special medicine.

### Causes

The common cold can be transmitted to others by droplets (when you sneeze) or by being physically close to other people. The virus can be present on people's skin or the items that they touch and is highly contagious. Hundreds of viruses cause the common cold and as yet there is still no cure for the cold.

If you believe you need to see a doctor, he or she will make sure you do not have a bacterial infection by performing several tests.

### Traditional Treatment

Any type of treatment is designed to enable your body to be able to fight the cold virus as well as make life more bearable for you at this time. Over the counter medications, lozenges, cough medicines and gargles are available - just ask our pharmacist for advice. Ensure you get adequate rest as this is vital to your healing. You may need much more sleep than usual. Drinking water is also important.

Call your doctor if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or if the cold goes on for more than a couple of weeks and your symptoms appear to be worsening however.

### Alternative/Natural Treatment

You could start these treatments as soon as you see the first symptom.

**Aromatherapy** - A steam inhalation can reduce congestion, and if the temperature is quite hot, it will also kill cold germs on contact. Choose eucalyptus, wintergreen, or peppermint. Place a few drops of the oil in a bowl and pour in boiling water.

Place a towel over your head, lean over the bowl to create a steam tent, and breathe the vapours.

### Prevention

Avoid smoking as this can aggravate a cold and delay your recovery time.

### Dietary Considerations

Start your 'attack' on the cold virus before winter even commences to get your body in tip top shape to be able to fight any virus that comes along. Ensure you are eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals, garlic, and onions.

Plenty of filtered water and natural fruit and vegetable juices. Spicy foods are thought to help the drainage of mucus. Try to avoid mucus forming foods such as dairy products, limit these foods and try to have low fat versions. Also less eggs, starches and sugar. Good nutrition is essential for resisting and recovering from a cold. Eat in a balanced way.

Take supplements as needed to ensure you are receiving the recommended dietary allowances for vitamin A, the vitamin B complex (vitamins B1, B2, B5, B6, folic acid), and vitamin C, as well as the minerals zinc and copper.

### **Personal Care**

- Suck on cough lollies to soothe your sore throat
- Dab Vicks Vaporub in and around your nostrils to breathe easier at night.
- Drink plenty of water, at least 10 glasses each day; this will replace the fluids lost through perspiration and your runny nose and minimise congestion.
- Humidify your room to keep your nose and throat tissues moist.

### **Prevention**

Try to build a strong immune system by eating well, avoiding cigarettes and drinking plenty of filtered water. Also try to avoid areas where there are likely to be people with colds. Cold viruses often survive for hours in the open, on doorknobs, money, and other surfaces, so wash your hands frequently. Get plenty of exercise as well to keep your immune system healthy.

Think of others when you have a cold and always cover your mouth when you sneeze.

### **When to seek further professional advice**

- your newborn (two months or younger) has cold symptoms.
- if you are wheezing or having extreme difficulty breathing.
- your throat hurts and you have a very high temperature, or your symptoms seem to be getting worse.
- your temperature is very high. You may have pneumonia.

**Seek medical care immediately.**