

THE COMMON COLD

BASIC FACTS:

The common cold is often referred to as **Acute Rhinitis**, where rhinitis is derived from the Greek word **rhin** which means **nose**. It is a mild self limiting syndrome of the upper respiratory tract and can be caused by one of a number of viruses. Traditionally, exposure to damp and cold has been believed to cause colds but this has not been proven. This infection may contribute to secondary infections in the eyes and middle ears (i.e. Sinusitis). The difference between the common cold and other respiratory infections are the mildness of symptoms and the absence of fever.

Colds usually progress gradually for the first one or two days, followed by worsening symptoms for two or three days, after which symptoms begin to lessen. Cigarette smokers tend to have a longer period of symptoms that sometimes last for up to two weeks.

Symptoms:

- Coughing
- Sore Throat
- Pain
- Fever
- Nasal Discharge
- Sneezing

Treatments:

- Rest
- Fluids(i.e. juice or water)
- A balanced diet as can be tolerated
- Antipyretic drugs (i.e. acetaminophen or aspirin. Be cautious giving aspirin to children due to Reyes Syndrome)
- Ask smokers to smoke outside

Prevention:

- People with colds should avoid crowded places, infants, very young children and elderly or chronically ill persons.
- Frequent handwashing.
- Covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Careful disposal of used tissues.

Symptoms of possible complications to report to your doctor:

- Shaking, chills
- Chest Pain
- Ear Ache
- Shortness of Breath
- Skin rash
- Temperature over 102 degrees Fahrenheit
- Throat pain or white spots on the throat or tonsils
- Cough with thick yellow or gray sputum (phlegm, mucous)

ATTENTION: This web page is intended to be used for health information ONLY. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, please call your doctor or 911, or your local emergency service number.