

COLD AND FLU

Colds are very common viral illnesses that occur year round, but primarily in winter months. Because there are many viruses that cause colds, people may experience multiple colds per year, or find that their symptoms vary with each infection. The flu is also caused by a virus, but is due to a specific virus called influenza virus. The typical symptoms of the flu are high fever, body aches, fatigue, sore throat, headache and/or painful cough.

The main treatment for viral infections is supportive care. Supportive treatment consists of taking medications to treat the symptoms, so that you are more comfortable while you are recuperating from the illness. Additionally, if started within 48 hours, there are some medications that may help fight the infection itself. For colds, we recommend zinc products, such as ColdEeze lozenges, zinc throat sprays, or zinc bubblegum. We do not recommend Zicam nasal gel, as it has been associated with a few cases of permanent loss of smell. For the flu, Tamiflu and Relenza are prescription antiviral medications; Oscillococcinum is a holistic over the counter medication that may help fight the flu. Because antibiotics only work against bacteria, and not viruses, the practitioners at Cowell do not prescribe antibiotics for colds.

Below is a list of what to do for common symptoms associated with a cold. Additionally, plenty of rest and fluids is also important.

1. **SORE THROAT** Tylenol (APAP, acetaminophen) and Advil (Iprin, ibuprofen) are the most effective pain relievers for a sore throat. Take Tylenol 1000 mg every 6 hours as needed, or 2-3 Advil every 6 hours with food. Additionally, gargling with salt water (1 tsp.salt in 1 cup of warm water), spraying with chloraseptic spray, or sucking on lozenges may provide temporary relief of a sore throat. A severe sore throat should be evaluated by a practitioner, especially if accompanied by a fever.
2. **CONGESTION** **Nasal Congestion:** Decongestants such as **pseudoephedrine (Sudafed or Sudodrin Forte)** will help open the nasal passages and ears, and make it easier to breathe/hear. Unless you have a runny nose, avoid the decongestants that come packaged with an **antihistamine** (such as **Drixoral**) as the antihistamine component may make you sleepy. The usual dose of pseudoephedrine is 30-60 mg 4 times per day as needed. Pseudoephedrine may make it difficult to sleep at night. A nasal spray such as Afrin or Otrivine can open the nasal passages and make it easier to breathe. Do not use the nasal spray longer than 5 days, as it can cause rebound nasal congestion if used too long. Saline nasal sprays may also be helpful. **Chest Congestion:** guaifenesin is an expectorant used for chest congestion; it may also help nasal congestion. Guaifenesin is marketed as Mucinex. Buy plain Mucinex if you only need something for chest congestion, MucinexDM if you need a cough suppressant in addition to a chest decongestant, and MucinexD if you want to treat both chest and nasal congestion. Additionally, Robitussin DM can be used for chest congestion.
3. **COUGH** A good general-purpose cough medicine is Robitussin DM. It contains a cough suppressant, as well as an expectorant to help clear chest congestion. It can be used every 4 to 6 hours as needed. If the cough is not helped by this or you have trouble breathing, please see a practitioner.
4. **FEVER/BODY ACHES** Tylenol or Advil will help control fevers, as well as the aches and pains associated with a viral illness. See the sore throat section for proper doses of these medications. Be sure not to exceed the recommended dose for each medicine, and remember that Advil should always be taken with food.

***NOTE OF CAUTION:** It is important not to take above the directed amounts of **Tylenol** (No more than 4000 mg **Tylenol** within a 24-hour period) as it can lead to hepatitis. Many over the counter cold preparations also contain **Tylenol**. Be sure to check cold remedy labels so that you do not inadvertently take excess **Tylenol**. Tylenol is also known as acetaminophen.