

How to Treat Your Colds and Viral Sore Throats

(Adapted from [J. Mercola, D.O.](http://www.mercola.com) from www.mercola.com)

How Do I Catch a Cold?

The humble cold is the most common infectious disease in the U.S. It accounts for more absences from school and work than any other illness. It is the leading cause of patient visits to physicians.

It is not easy to catch a cold. Your body's natural defenses usually fight off these viruses. There is a direct relation between your risk of catching a cold and the amount of time spent in contact with an infected person. That is why families tend to get sick together.

The most common route of infection is not from coughing or sneezing, or walking barefoot in the rain, but from **hand-to-hand contact**. That is why when you have a cold, washing your hands frequently is so important. The likelihood of you becoming a victim of the cold virus increases however, if you are overtired or physically exhausted.

Children under two generally get 10-12 colds a year, especially if they are in daycare. Older children and young adults get about 6 colds per year. After the age of 30 the number starts to decrease to about two per year.

How Long Will It Last?

Most uncomplicated colds last between eight and nine days, but about 25% last two weeks, and 5-10% last three weeks.

What Should I Do for Treatment?

1. As long as your temperature remains below 102 F there is no need to lower it. Cold viruses do not reproduce at higher body temperatures.

A slight fever should help you get rid of the virus quicker and feel better much sooner.

2. A study (J Infect Dis Dec 1990) showed that people who take aspirin and Tylenol (acetaminophen) suppress their body's ability to produce antibodies to destroy the cold virus.

You should only use these medications if you have a temperature greater than 105 F, severe muscle aches or weakness.

3. **Chicken soup** does help the symptoms. Chicken contains a natural amino acid called cysteine. Cysteine can thin the mucus in the lungs and make it less sticky so it you can be expel it more easily. Campbell's soup won't work as well as the homemade version. Make the soup hot and spicy with plenty of pepper. The spices will trigger a sudden release of watery fluids in the mouth, throat, and lungs. This will help thin down the respiratory mucus, so it's easier to cough up

and expel.

4. Rest. It is important to rest and take it easy throughout the time you are ill. The time you are ill may be longer if you do not allow yourself to recuperate and recover completely. If you exercise regularly, you needn't stop. However, you should definitely cut back on the intensity until you feel better.

5. Wash your hands frequently and try to keep them away from your nose and eyes. Use disposable tissues as opposed to cloth handkerchiefs. If you are caring for a child with a cold, PLEASE WASH YOUR HANDS every time you have to wipe their nose. This will protect you from being infected. Dove soap is the mildest soap that you can use for this purpose.

6. Drink plenty of fluids.

Water is the best. Try to drink at least eight to ten glasses a day. This will help the stuffiness and help the secretions loosen. Avoid using tap water, use bottled or filtered water to limit your exposure to chlorine. You can put lemon juice in your water or also try green tea as a water alternative

7. If you are congested and can't breathe very well because your nose is plugged up, **we recommend the decongestant Sudafed** (pseudoephedrine). We can give you a 12 hour preparation that also has guaifenesin to help you breath better.

You must be careful and make sure the medicine is out of your system before bedtime. Most people will not sleep well on Sudafed and sleep is what will make you better. You can use AFRIN (or generic equivalent) at night. This spray will open up your nose without interfering with your sleep.

8. However, if you are not congested and "drowning" in nasal discharge an **antihistamine will help dry up the secretions.** Please note that there are two problems with non-prescription antihistamines (such as Chlor-Trimeton (chlorpheniramine) and Benadryl). They can put you to sleep. This isn't a difficulty at night but might be in the day. We encourage you to minimize their use because they can also increase your risk of developing a secondary sinus infection by thickening the nasal secretions and impairing drainage.

9. It will be very important to **stop all milk products.** This includes not only milk, but ice cream, all yogurt except plain, and especially cheese. Lactaid milk is NOT acceptable. This step is helpful to decrease the extra mucous that dairy products can cause you to produce.

10. Eating refined sugars weakens your immune system and promotes yeast overgrowth. This includes ALL non-diet pops which have eight teaspoons of sugar per can. Honey, molasses, maple syrup, date sugar, cane sugar, corn sugar, beet sugar, corn syrup, fructose, lactose, and other refined carbohydrates are known promoters of yeast growth. Reducing or eliminating these

in your diet will help your immune system. However, you need not become obsessive about the sugar. If it is the 4th or 5th ingredient in a food, that would probably be acceptable.

11. Many people will start to drink large amounts of orange juice when they are sick. All the simple sugars (fructose) in the juice will actually make you worse. If you feel the need to take extra vitamin C please read #13. **Try to avoid ALL juices**, including organic juices or ones with no sugar added; Gatorade type sports drinks also need to be avoided. If you must have a juice use diluted organic apple juice; do NOT use orange juice as it is the most allergic fruit.

12. Researchers have shown **zinc lozenges reduce the severity and duration of cold symptoms**, particularly a sore throat. They believe the zinc is directly toxic to the virus and stimulates your body to produce antibodies to destroy the virus. They seem to work for about three out of four colds. You can suck on ONE-QUARTER of a zinc lozenges every thirty minutes. Do not chew the tablets and swallow them directly as they won't work. If you get nauseous you should stop the zinc immediately as it is a sign of toxicity.

13. Extra vitamin C is also helpful.

You can take 500-2,000 mg every 1-2 hours. The only side effect you may have are loose stools at higher doses. If this happens decreasing the dose will quickly clear up the symptoms.

14. Vitamin A in large doses may be helpful.

200,000 units twice a day for FIVE days. (eight of the 25,000 unit capsules twice a day). Children can take half the dose. Even though vitamin A is oil soluble this dose is very safe if not taken for long periods. However if you are pregnant you should not use it.

15. Garlic is an excellent natural antibiotic.

Kyolic is one of the best brands. You might use six capsules four times a day for several days. Echinacea is the most widely used herbal medication in Europe for colds and infections. It contains inulin which enhances the production of immunoglobulins. Astragalus and goldenseal also enhance the immune system and are widely used in Europe and China for infections.

16. Essential fatty acids like flax oil should also be taken regularly.

This will help your immune system build the proper antibodies.

Why Should I Avoid An Antibiotic?

More than 300 different viruses can cause colds. Each time you have a cold it is caused by a distinct virus (i.e. adenovirus, rhinovirus, parainfluenza virus, coronavirus). A virus is much smaller than a bacteria. It is a tiny cluster of genetic material surrounded by a protein wrapper.

Medical science currently does not have any drugs that can kill these viruses. Antibiotics, including penicillin, **DO NOT** have any effect on viruses. We only use them to treat the secondary bacterial infections that can complicate a cold.

When Should I Call the Office?

Sinus, ear and lung infections (bronchitis and pneumonia) are examples of bacterial infections that do respond to antibiotics. If you develop any of the following symptoms you should call your doctor's office:

- **Fever over 102°**
- **Ear pain develops.**
- **Pain around your eyes, especially with a green nasal discharge.**
- **Have shortness of breath or a persistent uncontrollable cough.**
- **You are persistently coughing up green and yellow sputum.**
- **You have any questions**