

# Cough, Cold, Sore Throat

## WHAT IS IT?

The common cold is a viral infection of your upper respiratory tract — your nose and throat. A common cold is usually harmless, although it may not feel that way at the time.

## WHAT CAUSES IT?

Most sore throats and colds are caused by a virus and typically resolve in 1-2 weeks. They are spread by tiny air droplets that are released when a sick person sneezes, coughs or blows their nose. Symptoms will vary because there are over 100 viruses that can cause a virus. Medications can be used to improve symptoms but time is the only intervention that will resolve symptoms.

**ANTIBIOTICS WILL NOT HELP!**

## SYMPTOMS

- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Post-nasal drip
- Cough
- Fever
- Headache

## WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE:

- Fever higher than 100.5 F.
- Symptoms improve but then get worse.
- Symptoms do not improve after 1 to 2 weeks.

## SELF CARE

- Rest and stay hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids; water, juices, non-caffeinated tea.
- If you smoke, stop, especially when ill.
- Increase humidification by taking a warm shower or using a humidifier or vaporizer.
- Irrigate nasal passages (Neti pot) to promote drainage of mucus.
- Gargle with warm salt water, 1/2 tsp of salt in 4 ounces of warm water, several times a day.
- Hard candies, throat lozenges, ice chips, jello, and popsicles may be soothing for a sore throat.
- Over the counter medications: **CAUTION: Always follow package instructions.**
  - Ibuprofen or acetaminophen (Motrin or Tylenol); fever, discomfort, inflammation
  - Pseudoephedrine or Phenylephrine (Sudafed or Neo-synephrine); congestion
  - Guaifenesin (Mucinex or Robitussin); cough, congestion
  - Dextromethorphan (robitussin DM or Delsym); cough
  - Oxymetazoline (Afrin) or Fluticasone (Flonase): ear fullness or pressure

The information presented here is not intended to be used for the diagnosis of a health problem or as a substitute for consulting a licensed medical professional. When using an Over-the-Counter medication please be sure to follow the package instructions.

Contact Health Services if you have any additional questions, concerns or to make an appointment.



*Learning with Purpose*

The Wellness Center at University Crossing  
978-934-6800

<http://www.uml.edu/student-services/Wellness-Center>