

Upper Respiratory Illness:

An upper respiratory illness is an illness that can affect your nose, throat, ears and sinuses. Almost all URIs are caused by a virus. They spread easily from person to person, most often through coughing or sneezing. Most URIs will get better in 7-14 days.

General Self-Care Measures:

- Get plenty of rest and drink non-alcoholic fluids
- Wash hands frequently
- Use a cool mist humidifier if the air in the home is dry
- Try to quit smoking, if you smoke
- Stay home and away from others until fever free for 24 hours when not taking medication that reduce fever

Over-the-Counter Medications:

- **Caution: If taking multiple medications, cross check active ingredients to avoid overdosing on any single medication.**
- Ibuprofen:
 - 400mg every 4-6 hours or 600mg every 6-8 hours, as needed, for fever and/or pain
- Acetaminophen:
 - 650mg every 6 hours, as needed, for fever and/or pain
- Saltwater gargles:
 - ½ teaspoon of salt dissolved in 8 oz of warm water. Gargle and spit as frequently as needed for sore throat.
- Throat lozenges and throat spray:
 - Use as directed
- Nasal Saline Rinses (such as Neti-pot or Neil Med Sinus Rinse):
 - Read instructions and use as directed.
- Nasal Spray:
 - Oxymetazoline/Afrin (nasal decongestant)-use as directed for sinus congestion but not for more than 3 days
 - Fluticasone/Flonase or Triamcinolone/Nasacort (nasal steroid)- use as directed for sinus congestion and/or allergies
- Guaifenesin:
 - Take as directed, as needed, for chest congestion
- Dextromethorphan:
 - Take as directed for cough suppression

- Antihistamines:
 - Sedating: Diphenhydramine (Benadryl). Take 1-2 tablets (25-50mg) once daily, at bedtime. **Caution: this medication may cause drowsiness**
 - Non-Sedating: good for daytime use because they will not cause drowsiness. Examples: cetirizine (Zyrtec), loratadine (Claritin) or fexofenadine (Allegra), and others. Taken once daily in the morning.
- Pseudoephedrine:
 - Can be purchased at local pharmacies. Take Drivers License and ask the pharmacist for Sudafed. Take as directed on box as needed for sinus congestion.
- Eye drops:
 - Carboxymethylcellulose Sodium (Refresh Tears) -use as needed for red eyes associated with cold symptoms.
 - Ketotifen (Zaditor)- use as needed for itchy/watery eyes

When should I seek care?

- You have a fever of 100.4 F or higher for more than 3 days.
- You get a new fever after several days of feeling the same or getting better.
- You have a significant sore throat or ear pain.
- You are unable to swallow your oral secretions (spit).
- You have a cough that lasts more than 10 days or you begin coughing up blood.
- You have any new or worsening symptoms such as difficulty breathing.

UHC self-care guidelines are based on the most recent recommendations of national medical authorities