

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