



Over-the-counter medications for upper respiratory infection

The clinician has diagnosed you or your child with upper respiratory infection, also known as the common cold.

Symptoms may include:

- Stuffy or runny nose
- Body aches
- Congestion
- Sneezing
- Mild, hacking cough
- Scratchy, tickly, or sore throat
- Watery eyes
- Headache
- Chills
- Low grade fever (under 100.4°F)
- Fatigue
- Nasal discharge from the nose that thickens and turns yellow or green

Upper respiratory infections are viruses. Antibiotics will not help you feel better sooner or avoid spreading the virus to others. To help with other symptoms, try:

- Saline nasal spray to thin nasal drainage
- Drink fluids, but avoid caffeine (water is nature's best way to clear mucus)
- Avoid smoking or being around smokers
- Use a bulb syringe to help children remove mucus

Over-the-counter medication recommendations:

Medications can help relieve symptoms to get you back on your feet. Your clinician suggests the following medications:

- Acetaminophen** (Tylenol®) for pain and to lower fever. Take the following dose: _____
- Ibuprofen** for pain and discomfort, inflammation, or fever if greater than 101°F. Take the following dose: _____
- Antihistamine** (Benadryl®) to relieve runny nose, sneezing, itchy or watery eyes, and nose or throat itching (may cause sleepiness). Take the following dose: _____
- Decongestants** (pseudoephedrine) including Sudafed® and others shrink swollen blood vessels and tissues and relieves congestion. Take the following dose: _____
- Expectorants** (guaifenesin) to help thin mucus so it will drain easier. Includes Mucofen®, Mucinex®, Humibid LA® or Humibid-e®. Take the following dose: _____

When to go back to the doctor:

- Fever greater than 100.4°F and if it stays up despite using fever reducing medications like Tylenol and Ibuprofen
- Symptoms lasting more than 10 days
- Symptoms not relieved by over-the-counter medications
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing

References:

1. Johns Hopkins Medicine, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/upper-respiratory-infection-uri-or-common-cold>, 8/19/21.
2. Cleveland Clinic, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/12342-common-cold>, 4/30/20.
3. Cleveland Clinic, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/8613-ear-infection-otitis-media>, 4/16/20.
4. Mayo Clinic, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions>, 9/17/18.
5. CDC: Sinus Infection, <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/sinus-infection.html>, 9/27/19.
6. Teladoc, <https://www.teladoc.com/health-talk/could-you-have-an-upper-respiratory-infection/>, 8/19/21 and <https://www.newhealthadvisor.org/Can-Bronchitis-Turn-Into-Pneumonia.html>, 8/19/21.