

What you can do for a cold...

... to get better

- ▶ Get plenty of rest to help your body's immune system fight off the virus.
- ▶ Maintain an adequate fluid intake and avoid alcohol.
- ▶ Avoid smoking or exposure to cigarette smoke.

... to relieve respiratory symptoms

- ▶ For a sore throat, paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin may be helpful.
- ▶ Saline (salty water) nasal sprays or drops can help clear mucus.
- ▶ Steam inhalations can also help clear mucus from blocked sinuses.
- ▶ A decongestant, such as phenylephrine, may help 'dry' a runny nose or relieve blocked sinuses.

Some cold and flu medicines used to relieve symptoms should not be taken by people with particular medical conditions or who are using certain other medicines. Decongestants should not be used for more than a few days.

To choose the best medicine for you, always read the label and ask your doctor or pharmacist for help.

Be medicinewise

Find out how at
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Call NPS Medicines Line on
1300 633 424 (1300 MEDICINES)

Join the fight against antibiotic resistance
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WHY DO SOME PEOPLE NEED ANTIBIOTICS?

Information for people at increased risk of complications from a cold or flu



Do I need an antibiotic?

Cold and flu season is hard on everyone, but for some older people and those who have chronic (long-term) health conditions, it can be especially difficult.

Antibiotics are not prescribed for the majority of uncomplicated respiratory tract infections including colds and the flu. This is because antibiotics only work on infections caused by bacteria — common colds and the flu are infections caused by viruses.

However, some people are more likely to develop complications from respiratory tract infections.

If you have a cold or the flu and your doctor believes that you are at particular risk of getting, or already have, a serious bacterial infection, such as pneumonia, they are likely to prescribe antibiotics.

- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to develop complications like pneumonia or hearing loss.
- ▶ People with chronic conditions, such as asthma, diabetes or immune problems, are also more likely to need an antibiotic to treat respiratory tract infections.
- ▶ Those at higher risk of complications include some older people with a chronic condition, such as diabetes or heart, neuromuscular and lung conditions.

What to do if you are prescribed an antibiotic

If you, or someone you care for, are prescribed an antibiotic, make sure you:

- ▶ know how long you need to take it for — if this is not clear from the pharmacy label, ask your doctor or pharmacist
- ▶ always take the antibiotics as instructed by your health professional
- ▶ don't take left-over antibiotics or any that weren't prescribed for you.

What is antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotics only work on infections caused by bacteria, NOT those caused by viruses. Common colds and flu are caused by viruses.

Antibiotics are different from other medicines because misuse and overuse can make them less effective.

Inappropriate use of antibiotics is making them ineffective against some bacteria. This is called **antibiotic resistance**.

With few new antibiotics being developed and antibiotic resistance increasing, it is becoming more difficult to treat bacterial infections.

If you have a chronic condition, you are at greater risk of developing a severe infection from antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

When to see a doctor

Older people and those with chronic conditions should see a doctor for their respiratory tract infection if they:

- ▶ have a flare-up of an ongoing lung problem such as asthma
- ▶ have trouble breathing
- ▶ have symptoms that don't improve or that get worse
- ▶ develop a high fever, chills, chest pain, or lower-than-normal body temperature (below 36°C)
- ▶ feel like the infection has moved lower down in the chest or a cough gets worse.

Preventing the spread of colds and flu

There are things you can do to protect yourself and others.

- ▶ Get the annual flu vaccine and check if you need the pneumococcal vaccine (ask your doctor or pharmacist about this).
- ▶ Avoid contact with people who have a cold or flu.
- ▶ Use tissues to blow your nose, and throw them away after use.
- ▶ Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- ▶ Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- ▶ Wash your hands after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.