



National Prescribing Service Limited

Australia's peak, independent, education and information provider about medicines

Fact Sheet

May 2005

Common sense tips to prevent and manage common colds in adults

Common colds need common sense, they don't need antibiotics. Common colds are caused by a virus and usually get better on their own after 5-7 days. Adults can get 2-4 colds per year. Antibiotics won't help a common cold get better faster, won't stop a cold from getting worse, and won't stop a cold spreading to other people.

How can I help prevent getting a common cold?

- Avoid close contact with cold sufferers and encourage them to:
 - cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing
 - throw tissues in the bin after blowing their nose
 - wash their hands with soap, particularly before eating food and after blowing their nose.
- Avoid sharing cups, glasses and cutlery.
- Keep your hands away from their eyes, nose and mouth.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced meals.
- Sleep for 7-8 hours per night.
- Don't forget to exercise.

Three simple steps to manage a cold

1. You need to take it easy

Shift into low gear and stay at home if you can. Get plenty of rest until you're feeling better. You won't be popular if you spread your cold around the work place.

2. You can relieve your symptoms

Over-the-counter cold remedies, decongestants and cough suppressants may relieve some common cold symptoms, but will not prevent, cure, or even shorten the illness. However, they can make you feel better. Always follow the instructions on medicines. Ask your pharmacist for advice, talk to your doctor, or call *Medicines Line* on 1300 888 763.

3. See your doctor or pharmacist if it gets worse

Your doctor can check the severity of your illness, tell you how long it may last, give advice on treatment and provide you with a medical certificate if needed.

It is important to see your doctor if you are worried or if your symptoms are severe, last longer than usual or if you have a severe headache or a stiff neck, your eyes hurt when exposed to light, you have difficulty waking up, a skin rash, a fever that lasts longer than three days, or vomiting.

Every winter National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) runs the national health campaign *common colds need common sense*. This campaign encourages people to follow simple advice to correctly manage the common cold, without the use of antibiotics: take it easy, relieve the symptoms and see your doctor or pharmacist if the cold worsens. For more information visit www.gottacold.com

NPS is an independent Australian organisation for Quality Use of Medicines, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Media enquiries: Anna Peppas on 02 8217 8700 (bh), 0419 618 365 (media mobile), apeppas@nps.org.au or visit our website www.nps.org.au