

# Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics

## Toolbox talk 2008



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## Part 1 — Instructions for presenters

### About this toolbox talk

Thank you for presenting this toolbox talk to staff.

This toolbox talk will provide some important messages about:

- key infectious periods and ways to help protect staff from common colds
- why antibiotics won't help people get back to work faster.

This toolbox talk provides you with an opportunity to improve the health and safety of employees at work and at home.

### Who could present this toolbox talk?

This toolbox talk is intended for Occupational Health and Safety committee representatives, company health advisers, consultants or managers. You do not need a medical background to present this material.

### Duration of toolbox talk — approximately 5 minutes.

Included in this toolbox talk:

- a *Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics* script that accompanies the electronic slideshow
- a diagram of the *Common colds timeline*
- a *The cold and the beautiful* poster for display around your workplace
- an evaluation form for presenters.

To download the electronic slideshow go to the NPS website at [www.nps.org.au/commoncolds](http://www.nps.org.au/commoncolds) and select 'Workforce'.

You may order the *Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics* brochure for staff to read or take home by going to the NPS website at [www.nps.org.au/commoncolds](http://www.nps.org.au/commoncolds) and selecting 'Workforce'.

### Before the toolbox talk

- Familiarise yourself with the script provided.
- Read the script on the left, and use the instructions on the right as cues for action.
- Discuss with the group the questions found inside the grey boxes.
- Have the poster and brochures ready to display during the talk, or link to the website to show them.

## After the toolbox talk

Please complete the evaluation form in Part 3. It should take approximately 5 minutes.

Please return the completed evaluation form to the National Prescribing Service Ltd in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope to:

National Prescribing Service  
Reply Paid, PO Box 1980  
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

**Due date: 3 October 2008**

### **DISCLAIMER**

The information in these training materials is not medical advice, so talk to your doctor or pharmacist before making any decisions based on this information.

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NPS is a non-profit organisation, independent of government and the pharmaceutical industry. NPS works with doctors, health professionals, government, industry and consumers to improve health through Quality Use of Medicines. The information NPS provides is based on critical analyses of current evidence, and is consistent with nationally recognised guidelines. NPS is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

## Part 2 — Toolbox talk script

Script	Instructions
<p>We can all help to prevent the spread of common colds at work.</p> <p>Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics.</p> <p>During the next 5 minutes we will work through some information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when people with colds are infectious</li> <li>• workplace common sense, and</li> <li>• myth busting the use of antibiotics for the common cold.</li> </ul> <p>This information is to help protect staff from common colds and does not replace medical advice from a doctor or pharmacist.</p>	
<p><b>1. When are people with colds infectious?</b></p> <p>Cold symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• usually begin 1–2 days after contact with the virus<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• usually improve 7–10 days after they start, and</li> <li>• if present, a cough can last 1–2 weeks longer than other symptoms.<sup>2,3</sup></li> </ul> <p>When do you think people with colds are infectious?</p> <p>Take a look at this <i>Common colds timeline</i>.</p> <p>A person can be infectious for 1–2 days before the first symptoms appear.<sup>1</sup> They tend to be more infectious during the first 2–4 days of symptoms, but can remain infectious for up to 3 weeks.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>Show the <i>Common colds timeline</i>.</p>
<p><b>2. Workplace common sense</b></p> <p>Common colds are usually caught from other people. Colds can be passed on through touching hands or objects, or by breathing in droplets from sneezes or coughs.<sup>4</sup> For example, one of the most common viruses that causes colds, rhinoviruses, can survive in mucus left on surfaces such as door handles, pens, light switches, taps and telephones for several hours.<sup>5</sup></p>	

Script	Instructions
<p><b><i>Can you give me examples of workplace common sense we can recommend to protect staff from common colds?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.</li> <li>• Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth to stop infecting yourself.</li> <li>• Use paper tissues and throw away after use.</li> <li>• Wash hands with soap thoroughly and frequently, especially before preparing and eating food and after blowing your nose.</li> <li>• Wipe down your telephone handsets and dial buttons, keyboards and mouses.</li> <li>• Avoid sharing pens and telephones.</li> </ul>	<p>Group discussion.</p> <p>Read the missing examples from the list.</p> <p>OH&amp;S committee to consider the availability of cleaning products for staff.</p>
<p><b>Washing hands</b></p> <p>Although 'antibacterial' soaps are commonly available, regular soap is preferred for handwashing. Scientists are concerned that antibacterial soap may be just as bad as overuse of antibiotics by forcing bacteria to become more resistant.<sup>6 7</sup></p> <p><b>Washing surfaces</b></p> <p>Daily cleaning of surfaces commonly touched by many staff, such as telephone handsets and door handles, is suggested.</p> <p>When we have a cold, our mood and general wellbeing at work can be affected.<sup>8</sup> The severity of common cold symptoms can also affect our speed of thinking and our speed at remembering things.<sup>9</sup></p> <p><i>Usually, we try to manage the symptoms.</i></p> <p>The NPS brochure has a section in the middle titled 'What will help?', which has practical and evidence-based approaches to help manage the symptoms.</p> <p><b>Common beliefs about antibiotics and colds</b></p> <p>Antibiotics used to be commonly prescribed for respiratory infections, like colds. Take a moment to reflect on your own beliefs about antibiotics.</p>	<p>Show <i>Common colds</i> brochure.</p>

Script	Instructions
<p><b><i>I will read some statements about antibiotics. Answer true or false, to yourself.</i></b></p> <p>For the common cold and flu infections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antibiotics stop these infections spreading to others. <b>(False)</b></li> <li>• Antibiotics help you get better faster. <b>(False)</b></li> <li>• Antibiotics prevent a common cold or flu from getting worse. <b>(False)</b></li> <li>• Antibiotics have no effect because common cold and flu infections are viral. <b>(True)</b></li> <li>• Using antibiotics when they are not needed may make them less effective when they are needed. <b>(True)</b></li> </ul>	<p>Read each statement to the group and pause. Then read the statement aloud again <b>with the answer.</b></p>
<p><b>3. Myth busting antibiotics</b></p> <p>Two decades of evidence proves that viruses, not bacteria, cause common colds and this has changed the way many doctors treat respiratory infections.<sup>10</sup> Doctors prefer to ‘wait and see’ while you manage the symptoms. Most colds only last 7–10 days — antibiotics can cause pain for no gain. People who use antibiotics for a common cold mistakenly credit the medicine for their recovery when it was simply their body’s immune system doing the work.</p> <p>Possible side effects of antibiotics include stomach upsets, diarrhoea and allergic reactions. In women, these side effects can also include thrush, and some antibiotics may stop the contraceptive pill from working properly.<sup>11</sup></p> <p>Australians are estimated to be among the highest users of antibiotics in the world,<sup>12</sup> with about 22 million prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacies in 2006.<sup>13</sup> The result is new strains of antimicrobial resistant bacteria<sup>14,15</sup> at a time when fewer new antibiotics are being discovered.<sup>14</sup> This may have a profound effect on the health of future generations.</p> <p>By using antibiotics less often, we can slow down the development of resistance and buy more time to develop new types of antibiotics.</p>	

Script	Instructions
<p><b>What action we can take to support the health of staff?</b></p> <p>Take the time now to discuss actions the committee could take to support the health of staff with the help of available resources.</p> <p>Remember to assign someone to be responsible for each of the actions agreed upon.</p>	
<p><b>Thank you for your time.</b></p> <p>If you would like to know more about common colds, take a look at the brochure and poster or visit the NPS website <a href="http://www.nps.org.au/commoncolds">www.nps.org.au/commoncolds</a>.</p>	<p>Point to brochures and poster.</p>

## Part 3 — Evaluation form

For presenters to complete, following completion of *Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics toolbox talk*.

<b>Name of organisation:</b>	
<b>Type of organisation:</b> (e.g. banking)	
<b>Date/s of toolbox talk/s:</b>	

### Questions

1. How many staff members are employed by your organisation in Australia? (approximately)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many toolbox talk/s did you present to OH&S committees in your organisation? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many staff members in total attended the OH&S committee toolbox talk/s? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Duration of toolbox talk/s: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes (average duration if several given).
5. Was there any discussion raised during or following the toolbox talk/s?     Yes     No

Common topics or questions raised:

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6. Did the OH&S committee recommend using NPS resources to support staff in your workplace?  
 Yes     No

Please tick all actions recommended:

- Order and distribute **brochures** to staff
- Posters** for the workplace and staff common rooms
- Link** to the NPS website on common colds at [www.nps.org.au/commoncolds](http://www.nps.org.au/commoncolds)
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Was there any other organisational or OH&S committee action taken following this toolbox talk?  
 Yes     No

Please describe:

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8. Are there any other comments or suggestions for improvement?

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## References

1. Dolin R, Common viral respiratory infections and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), in Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine (online). DL Kasper, et al., Editors. 2005, McGraw-Hill.
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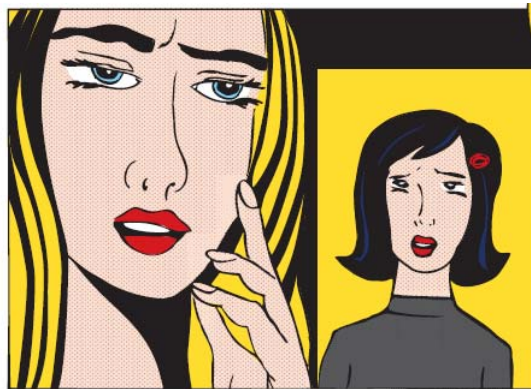


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# Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics

## Resources

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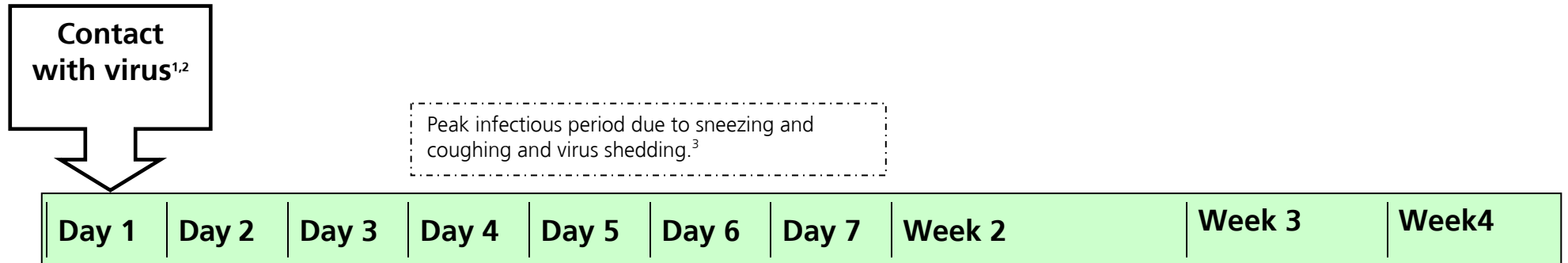


This initiative is supported by the



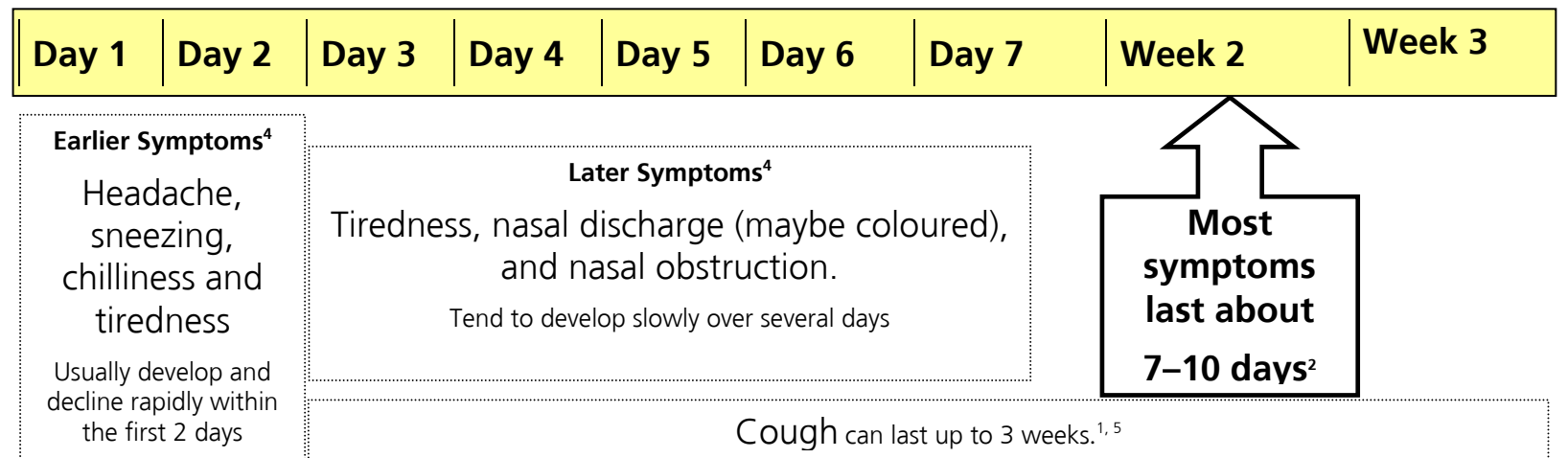
# Common colds timeline

Potentially infectious period



Fold here

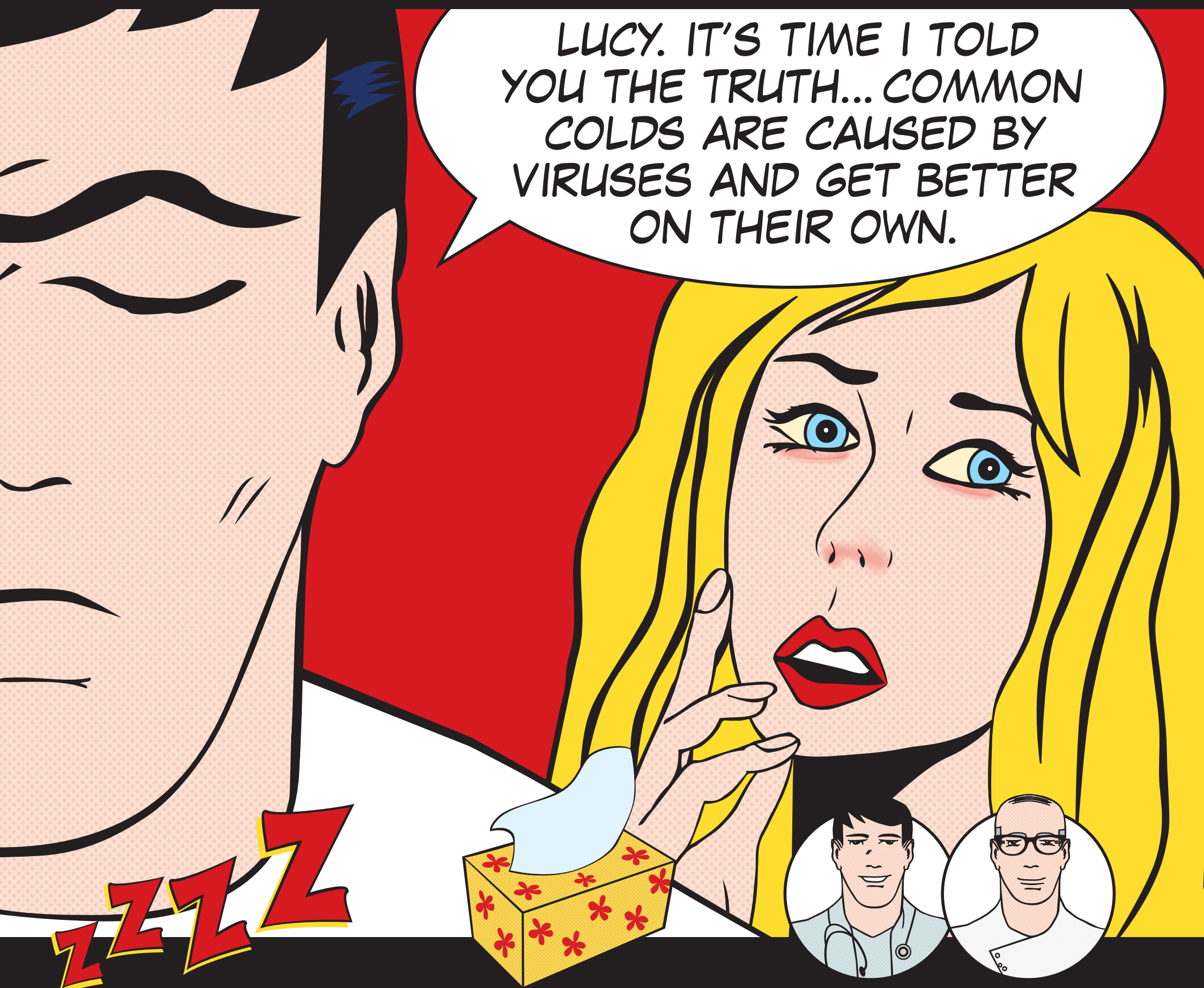
Possible symptoms



## Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics. 2008 presenters guide staff update

- 1 Long SS. Common cold. Oski's Pediatrics, Principles and Practice (online). Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2006 [www.opac.library.usyd.edu.au/search?t?oski's+pediatrics](http://www.opac.library.usyd.edu.au/search?t?oski's+pediatrics) (accessed 19 April 2006).
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# THE COLD & THE BEAUTIFUL



LUCY. IT'S TIME I TOLD YOU THE TRUTH... COMMON COLDS ARE CAUSED BY VIRUSES AND GET BETTER ON THEIR OWN.

ZZZZ

TAKE IT EASY

RELIEVE THE SYMPTOMS

SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR PHARMACIST IF IT GETS WORSE

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.NPS.ORG.AU/COMMONCOLDS](http://WWW.NPS.ORG.AU/COMMONCOLDS)



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