

Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics

Toolbox talk
2008



Purpose of this presentation

The information in this session is to help protect staff from common colds.

It does not replace medical advice from a doctor or pharmacist.



The National Prescribing Service (NPS)

Accurate, evidence-based information and services to help people manage their medicines.

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When are people with colds infectious?



Cold symptoms

- Usually begin 1–2 days after contact with the virus.
- Usually improve 7–10 days after they start.
- If present, a cough can last 1–2 weeks longer than other symptoms.



Common colds timeline

Potentially infectious period

Contact with virus

Peak infectious period due to sneezing and coughing and virus shedding.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
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Possible symptoms

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Week 2	Week 3
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Earlier symptoms

Headache, sneezing, chilliness and tiredness

Usually develop and decline within the first 2 days.

Later symptoms

Tiredness, nasal discharge (may be coloured), and nasal obstruction.

Tend to develop slowly over several days.

Most symptoms last about 7-10 days

Cough can last up to 3 weeks



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Workplace common sense



Encourage extra hygiene and cleaning

One of the most common viruses that causes colds, the rhinovirus, can survive in mucus left on surfaces such as door handles, pens, light switches, taps and telephones for *several* hours.



Group discussion

Can you give me examples of workplace common sense we can recommend to protect staff from common colds?



Washing hands and surfaces

- Although ‘antibacterial’ soaps are commonly available, regular soap is preferred for handwashing.
- Clean surfaces daily if they are commonly touched by many staff. This might include telephone handsets and door handles.



Common beliefs about antibiotics and colds



Answer true or false

For the common cold and flu infections:

1. Antibiotics stop these infections spreading to others.
2. Antibiotics help you get better faster.
3. Antibiotics prevent the common cold or flu from getting worse.
4. Antibiotics have no effect because the common cold and flu infections are viral.
5. Using antibiotics when they are not needed may make them less effective when they are needed.



Answers

For the common cold and flu infections:

1. Antibiotics stop these infections spreading to others. **False**
2. Antibiotics help you get better faster. **False**
3. Antibiotics prevent the common cold or flu from getting worse. **False**
4. Antibiotics have no effect because the common cold and flu infections are viral. **True**
5. Using antibiotics when they are not needed may make them less effective when they are needed. **True**



Myth busting antibiotics



Myth busting antibiotics

- Antibiotics have no effect because the common cold and flu infections are viral, not bacterial.
- People mistakenly credit antibiotics for their recovery when it was simply their body's immune system doing the work.
- Possible side effects of antibiotics include stomach upsets, diarrhoea and allergic reactions.



Myth busting antibiotics

- Australians are estimated to be among the highest users of antibiotics in the world, resulting in new strains of antimicrobial resistant bacteria.
- By using antibiotics less often, we can slow down the development of resistance and buy more time to develop new types of antibiotics.



What action can we take to support the health of staff?

Discuss together actions the committee could take to support the health of staff.



**Thank you for your time
and remember ...**

**Common colds need common
sense, not antibiotics.**

**For more information visit
www.nps.org.au/commoncolds**

