

# When to call

It is important to know that not all types of illnesses require immediate medical attention. However, you may want to see your physician if you experience the following:

- pain in your teeth or sinuses
- more than moderate ear pain, especially if on one side only
- fever over 101 degrees F or over 38 degrees C
- shaking chills
- coughing up thick yellow-green, gray, or rusty-colored phlegm
- any significant headache
- any significant pain that worsens when you flex your neck, especially if you also have significant sensitivity to light
- long coughing spells that end with periods of difficult breathing
- blue or gray lips, skin, or fingernails
- skin rash, especially purple spots
- long-lasting sore throat, especially if throat pain with significant swelling of the lymph nodes is the sole symptom
- significant chest pain when you take a deep breath or at rest, unrelated to coughing
- unusual fatigue
- confusion or change in level of alertness
- wheezing or significant shortness of breath with exertion
- symptoms not improving at all after 3-4 days (call early for advice if there is a history of asthma or pneumonia)

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# Before you see the doctor..

## Tips for cold and flu season



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## Prevention

During cold and flu season, remember what you can do to keep yourself healthy. A cold is passed through small droplets in the air after sneezing or coughing, or by hand to hand contact. Rubbing one's nose, mouth, or eyes after contact allows a virus to enter the body. Your risk of infection increases with stress, fatigue, poor nutrition, smoking, and lack of exercise. To keep up your resistance and minimize exposure, do the following:

- Take good care of yourself—get adequate sleep, eat a balanced diet, manage stress and get exercise
- Clean your hands frequently and keep them away from your nose, eyes, and mouth
- Do not share eating utensils and drinking containers
- Use disposable paper towels and cups in the bathroom
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay at home when you are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing
- Raise the humidity in your room

## Symptoms

Colds and flu usually start with a sore or scratchy throat and nasal congestion that develops later. These symptoms usually last 5 to 10 days with the total duration of symptoms lasting about 10 to 14 days. They often start improving gradually after the first 48 hours or so. Other common symptoms include:

- Stuffy, runny nose (thin discharge initially, thickening and changing color later on)
- Sneezing (mostly associated with colds, not flu)
- Run-down feeling
- Dry cough
- Congestion
- Hoarseness (laryngitis)
- Slight earache
- Fatigue
- Fever less than 101 degrees

## Self-care tips

Your body's defense will overcome the infection given the proper care and time. Antibiotics unfortunately cannot control them, however, there still are plenty of ways you can take care of yourself once you have caught a virus. They include the following:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink lots of liquids
- Use a humidifier in your room to increase moisture.
- Use saline nasal spray or drops to reduce nasal congestion.
- Gargling with warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon of salt to 1 cup of water) every three to four hours helps reduce the pain and swelling of a sore throat.
- You may use nonprescription medicines to lower a fever: either acetaminophen such as Tylenol, or an anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen. Avoid ibuprofen if you have chronic heart, kidney problems or diabetes. Do NOT use aspirin if you have a flu-like illness. In rare instances this can cause Reye's Syndrome or liver failure.
- Brief use (3 days maximum) of Afrin or Neosynephrine nasal drops/ spray up to twice a day can help, especially prior to a hot steamy shower.