

## Self-Care for Colds or Virus

Your health and safety are very important to us. Because of the large number of people with the flu, hospitals and emergency rooms are very busy. As a result, we are closely evaluating who we can take in the ambulance to the hospital.

We have evaluated that you do not need to go in the ambulance to the hospital at this time. Paramedics are giving you this sheet to help you care for yourself at home.

You can get medical care at a clinic, urgent care center or an emergency room. If you decide to do so, you will need to get to these places on your own. Remember hospitals are seeing a lot of patients with the flu. If you go to a hospital you risk getting infected with the flu.

Colds are caused by viruses. Your immune system must make antibodies to kill this virus. It takes a number of days for your immune system to make these antibodies. A virus cannot be cured with antibiotics. However, you can relieve symptoms and support your body's efforts to heal itself. No matter which symptoms you have, be sure to drink plenty of fluids (water or clear soup); stop smoking and drinking alcohol; and get plenty of rest.

### **Understand a Fever**

- Take your temperature several times a day. If your rectal temperature is 100.5°F or greater you have a fever.
- Relax, lie down. Go to bed if you want. Just get off your feet and rest. Also, drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
- You can lower a fever with medicines such as acetaminophen (ex. Tylenol), ibuprofen (ex. Motrin or Advil), or naprosyn (ex. Naproxen). Use as written on the label.
- **Never use aspirin if you are 18 years old or younger and think you may have influenza. Aspirin in young people with influenza can cause a deadly reaction called Reye Syndrome. Never use aspirin for any child 18 years old or younger for any illness with a fever.**

### **Treat a Troubled Nose Kindly**

- Breathe in water vapor to open blocked nasal passages. Stand in a hot shower or use a vaporizer.
- For patients over the age of four, saline nasal sprays and decongestant tablets may help open a stuffy nose. Dry up a runny nose or postnasal drip with antihistamines.
- For patients four years old and younger these nasal sprays and medications are not recommended. Use a bulb syringe and saline drops to suction mucus from the nose of an infant.

### **Soothe a Sore Throat and Cough**

- Gargle every 2 hours with 1/4 teaspoon of salt dissolved in 1/2 cup of warm water. Gargle, then spit out the salty water. Suck on throat lozenges and cough drops to moisten your throat.
- If coughing is a problem, take an expectorant to loosen mucus. If you have a dry cough, use a cough suppressant.

### **Ease Digestive Problems**

- Put fluid back into your body. Take frequent sips of clear liquids such as water or broth. Do not drink beverages with a lot of sugar in them, such as juices and sodas. These can make diarrhea worse. Pedialyte can be bought at the grocery store. It works well for infants. Gatorade mixed with an equal amount of water and served on ice gives a fluid with a good mix of electrolytes for older children and adults.
- As your appetite returns, you can resume your normal diet. Ask your doctor whether there are any foods you should avoid.

### **When to Call Your Doctor**

Call your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms or if you aren't feeling better after 7 days:

- Shortness of breath, fast breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough liquids
- Not waking up or interacting
- A child being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Worsening symptoms, especially after a period of improvement
- Fever with a rash
- Sudden dizziness or confusion
- Severe or continued vomiting
- Signs of dehydration, including extreme thirst, dark urine, infrequent urination, dry mouth
- Pain or pressure in the chest

This information is to help you care for a person who has a cold or viral illness.

The evaluation and/or treatment by the paramedics today are not to replace the recommendation of a doctor.

You can get medical care by a doctor on your own.

You should call 911 for any medical symptom, concerns that happen after we leave today.



These Home Care Instructions are for use during specified times of severe pandemic influenza, courtesy of the Metro Region EMS System, Metro Emergency Services Board, 2099 W. University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55014-3431