

“Sore throat, cough that won’t go away, runny nose, low grade fever, headache, tired and draggy” – if some or all of these symptoms fit how you are feeling, you probably

You’ve heard it many times – “We can put a man on the moon, send text messages to Timbuktu, and (name your best thing you ever did); why can’t we cure colds!?” The big problem is that colds are caused by viruses – hundreds of different ones, and our successful cures for viral illnesses are few and far between. Antibiotics, although great for bacterial infections, are useless against cold viruses. Simply put – we can’t CURE colds. We CAN treat the symptoms. Below are ideas for treatments which can be helpful.

## Fever and achiness

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Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is the safest and best treatment for fever and aches, unless you have liver problems. If there is a fever, take 650-1,000 mg. 3 or 4 times a day. Never take more than 4,000 mg in 24 hours. Be aware that many OTC cold medicines have acetaminophen in them so you have to count them in the total dose.

## Runny, stuffy nose

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Pseudo-ephedrine (Sudafed) is behind the counter and is reasonably effective at drying up a runny nose. It should be used with caution in anyone with high blood pressure or a heart condition and can cause a feeling of “jumpiness.”

## Cough

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We can prescribe a cough medicine containing codeine for the unusually severe cough. Dextromethorphan (DM containing cough medicines) is available OTC and may help.

## Thick phlegm

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Guaifenesin (Mucomyst and others), may help loosen thick phlegm. It will not diminish the production of mucus, just enable you to cough it out more easily.

## Fatigue

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Listen to your body, if you are tired, rest. If you feel like being active, do that. Taking deep breaths is always good for you so if you can, do not stay in bed all day.

Do try to avoid giving the “gift” of your cold to anyone else. Wash your hands regularly, cough/sneeze into your elbow, and avoid close physical contact while you are sick.

## What to watch for:

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Most colds run their course in 5-7 days as the body fights off the virus, although the cough can sometimes linger for several weeks. But sometimes colds can lead to complications such as bronchitis, sinusitis, and pneumonia. Watch for the following problems and call us if they develop:

- A fever above 100 degrees after the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the cold.
- Feeling no better after a week.
- Increasing shortness of breath.
- Increasing fatigue and just “feeling awful”