Cold and Flu Symptoms

Colds and/or flu like illnesses are caused by viruses. To date, there is no cure for viral infections. Antibiotics will not cure colds and flu, nor will they help! Viral infections must simply run their course and go away, usually within a 7 to 14 day period.

Everyone gets colds and you know their common symptoms:

- Runny Nose
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Coughing
- Headache and Body ache
- Red eyes

Things that you can do to help relieve your symptoms:

- Drink plenty of fluids—8 to 10 (8 ounce) glasses daily.
- Get extra rest.
- Fight nasal congestion by using a humidifier in your room, especially when you are sleeping, and take hot, steamy showers.
- Treat a stuffy nose with an over the counter decongestant, a cough with an over the counter cough medicine, and take over the counter pain relievers/fever reducers as needed for aches/pains/fevers/chills. Follow the directions on the medication label. Do not take Aspirin if you have a cold/flu.
- If taking a combination cold medicine – do not take additional Advil (ibuprofen), Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Aleve (Naproxen).
- If you choose to use a nasal decongestant spray, do not use it for more than three (3) days in a row in order to prevent a rebound and worsened nasal congestion.
- Use a saline (salt water) nasal spray several times daily.
- Gargle with warm salt water four (4) or more times daily to reduce sore throat symptoms.
- Drink as much steaming hot tea, chicken broth, or hot water as you like. The steam helps to moisturize the nasal passages. Caution: when drinking hot liquids, avoid personal injuries and burns.

If you develop any of the following, then make an appointment to be examined (next available) by a Health Center provider or by your personal medical provider:

- A persistent or high fever (101 deg. F or higher)
- Swollen or tender glands (lymph nodes) in your neck
- A whitish coating on your tonsils or throat
- Any nasal discharge that becomes colored—yellow, green—after 5 days having a cold or remains colored after 7-10 days total
- Persistent earache, cough, and/or sinus pain
- Any cold or flu that lasts for more than 2 weeks (14 + days)
- A new onset skin rash that is accompanying cold/flu symptoms

Go to ER for severe headache accompanied by a stiff neck, fever, nausea, and/or vomiting.
Self Care for Cold/Flu Symptoms