

Treatment for common cold

A cold is a viral infection that affects the nose, throat, sinuses, voice both and airways to lungs. The symptoms of a cold usually begin 2-3 days after you become infected and can last for 2-14 days.

Sometimes people refer to a bad cold as flu. However, colds and flu are caused by different viruses. The symptoms of a cold develop over a couple of days. Symptoms of flu are much more sudden, developing in hours.

What are the symptoms of the common cold?

The symptoms of a cold include;

- Sneezing
- Blocked/runny nose
- Sore throat
- Pain on swallowing
- Mild fever (between 37 – 38C)
- Mild earache
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Coughing

The symptoms of a cold are worse for first 2-3 days and then ease. Some colds can last for up to two weeks.

What causes the common cold?

Colds are caused by viruses. There are many different types of viruses which cause the cold. This is why it is possible to have one cold after another. Colds can spread in different ways. If you have a cold and sneeze tiny droplets of fluid containing the virus are released. Also, colds can spread through direct contact with someone else.

What treatment should I take?

There is no cure for a cold. Antibiotics are of no help for a cold as they do not work against viruses. Sometimes a cold can lead to another bacterial infection e.g. ear infection/sinusitis/ tonsillitis. If this happens and continues for more than two weeks then you may need to see your doctor. However, if you get chest pain or have difficulty breathing then you should seek urgent medical help.

To help relieve the symptoms of a cold you can;

- Drink plenty of fluids to stop becoming dehydrated
- Rest as much as possible
- Stop smoking or avoid those who do
- Use painkillers like paracetamol or ibuprofen to reduce fever and pain

We thank the doctors at Bishops Castle Medical Practice who created the original version of this leaflet