When to Call the Doctor

If you have tried home care techniques but they seem to be in vain, the following guidelines can help you determine when it is appropriate to seek your doctor’s advice. Remember, these are only guidelines: you know yourself and your family better than anyone else does. If you even have a slight concern that the condition is serious, call the doctor immediately.

Call the doctor about a sore throat if:
- It lasts for more than 48 hours.
- The inside of the throat is bright red, swollen, has white spots or a rough red rash—it may be strep throat.

Call the doctor about congestion if:
- A runny nose or nasal congestion lasts more than 10 days.
- The nasal discharge is yellow or green and continues all day.
- The sufferer is experiencing facial pain or an intense headache.

Call the doctor about a cough if:
- The cough lasts more than 10 days.
- The cough is severe, painful, and produces thick, bloody or green mucous.

Try Home Care First

Common cold and flu viruses account for many unnecessary trips to the doctor. Unfortunately, there is not much a doctor can do to help resolve these illnesses except to suggest ways to deal with the symptoms.

The next time someone in your family has cold or flu symptoms, try the following home care techniques. It may save you a trip to the doctor’s office and the expense of an office visit or insurance copayment.

- Take aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen to relieve headaches, muscle aches and fever. (Do not use aspirin to treat a child under the age of 18 who has a fever, flu symptoms or chickenpox without first talking to a doctor. Aspirin may increase the risk of Reye’s syndrome, a rare but often fatal condition.)
- Rest at home. If you feel well enough to be awake, take it easy.
- Drink plenty of liquids, especially if you have a fever. Your body needs extra fluids to keep your mucous more liquefied, which can help prevent bacterial complications such as ear infections. Salty liquids, like chicken soup, may also combat dizziness.
- If you have a headache, a cough or are congested, a humidifier or hot shower can help you feel better and breathe easier. In addition, a warm washcloth on your forehead and over your eyes can help relieve sinus congestion.

Remember, if you use over-the-counter (OTC) medications to treat symptoms of the flu or a cold, follow the label directions carefully. A medicine may interact or interfere with other medications you are currently taking, cause drowsiness, or be a health risk for those with certain medical conditions.

When to Treat Symptoms Yourself

You know you are suffering from something treatable at home, but you are not exactly sure what you are ailing from. How do you tell the difference? Use the following checklist as a guideline.

Typical symptoms of a cold include:
Try Home Care First

continued

✓ Sore throat
✓ Runny and/or congested nose
✓ Cough
✓ Congested ears
✓ Headache and/or dizziness
✓ Fever and/or chills
✓ Swollen glands*

Flu symptoms are similar, yet distinguishable from cold symptoms. They include:

✓ Sore throat with nasal congestion
✓ Muscle aches
✓ Dry cough
✓ Headache and dizziness
✓ Fatigue
✓ Fever with chills

*If your swollen glands are accompanied with a severe sore throat, intense fatigue, loss of appetite and a fever of 102°F or above, contact your physician to ensure you are not suffering from mononucleosis, a contagious viral infection.

An Ounce of Prevention
You may have heard the old saying “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” In the case of the flu or a cold, it is true. Taking preventative measures is the best method to avoid costly doctor’s visits and treatments.

The two best ways to prevent a cold or the flu are to wash your hands frequently, and to keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth. Be conscious of places where contaminated people may have touched, such as doorknobs, telephones and computer keyboards—especially at the office.

Virus, Bacteria or Allergy?

Allergies and viral illnesses such as a cold or the flu can be successfully treated at home without the help of a doctor. However, sometimes symptoms can be difficult to tell apart from symptoms of more serious conditions, such as a bacterial infection. How can you tell the difference? Here are a few guidelines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Virus</th>
<th>Bacteria</th>
<th>Allergy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congested or runny nose</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore or aching muscles</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizziness</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coughing</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry hacking</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing up mucus</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoarse voice</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal occurrence</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When in doubt, always contact your physician. Better to be proactive than to be sorry—and suffering—later.

When to Call the Doctor

• The sufferer experiences chest pain when breathing, or has difficulty breathing through the mouth.

Call the doctor about an earache if:

• The pain is severe.
• Discharge is coming out of either ear.
• Pain and problems last more than a week.

Call the doctor about a fever if:

• It is 101°F or higher.
• It persists for more than four days.
• It is accompanied by chills, shortness of breath, soaking sweats or confusion.
• The fever rises to 100°F or more on the third day of the illness.

Call the doctor about abdominal pain if:

• The pain is severe and/or localized.
• Black or bloody stool or vomit is present.
• There are eight or more bowel movements in a day.

Try Home Care First

continued

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