



Get the facts about Cold and Flu Medicines

FACT

You can help prevent colds and flu.

Get a flu vaccine (*see the Flu Comparison document also posted on this web site.*) Wash your hands often to prevent getting or spreading cold and flu germs. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. Eat healthy foods, exercise regularly, and get plenty of rest to help your body resist catching a cold or the flu. A flu shot is recommended for:

- persons over 50 years old
- children 6 months of age and older
- pregnant women
- persons with a chronic health problem, and household contacts of such individuals
- health care workers



FACT

Taking care of yourself when you have a cold or flu can help you feel better.

Get lots of rest and drink plenty of fluids - 8 or more glasses a day. Hot water, herbal tea, or clear broth soup can help relieve congestion. Nonprescription or over-the-counter (OTC) medicines help to relieve uncomfortable symptoms like cough, stuffy or runny nose, aches and pains, or fever. Treat each symptom separately and avoid remedies that combine drugs to treat multiple symptoms unless needed. See the list of OTC medicines that follows.

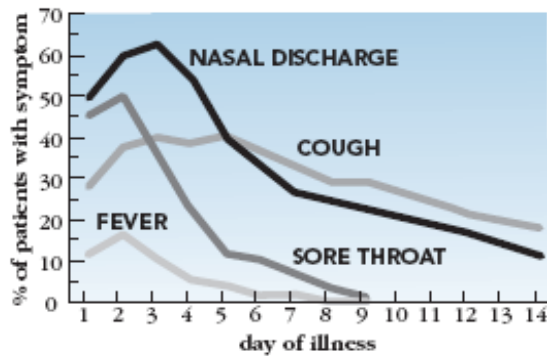
FACT

Antibiotics are not for colds or flu.

There is no cure for colds or flu. These illnesses are caused by viruses. Antibiotics won't help because they kill only bacteria – not viruses. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed can be harmful and increases your chances of being infected by **resistant** bacteria that antibiotics cannot kill. As noted by the CDC (US Centers for Disease Control), “families and entire communities feel the impact when disease-causing germs become resistant to antibiotics.” Antibiotics can also cause side effects such as stomach upset, diarrhea, and vaginal infections.

Know when Antibiotics Work			
Illness	Usual Cause		Antibiotic Needed?
	Virus	Bacteria	
Cold	✓		No
Flu	✓		No
Chest Cold (otherwise healthy adults & children)	✓		No
Sore Throat (except Strep)	✓		No
Runny Nose (green or yellow mucus)	✓		No
Middle Ear Fluid (otitis media with effusion)	✓		No

Adapted from: CDC/FDA Campaign — Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work



Reference: Duration of Symptoms in 139 Rhinovirus Colds
- Centers for Disease Control

FACT

Some symptoms can last for 2 weeks or more following a cold or flu.

Fever and sore throat generally improve within 4-5 days, and most people feel better within a week. However, cough and nasal discharge can last 2 weeks or longer!

When to Call Kaiser Permanente

Call us if you have:

- Trouble breathing, wheezing or tightness in your chest.
- A fever with stiff neck or a severe headache.
- A fever of 104°F or higher that does not go down after two hours of home treatment.
- Coughed-up mucous that is bloody.
- Severe ear pain, sudden hearing loss, or discharge from the ear.
- A very sore throat and a hard time swallowing.
- A deep cough with lots of mucous or a cough that lasts more than three weeks. Remember that dry, hacking coughs can last several weeks after an illness caused by a virus. Yellow or green mucus do not necessarily mean that you have a bacterial infection. Antibiotics are only useful for bacterial infections.
- A fever of 102°F or higher for one day, 101°F or higher for three days, or 100°F or higher for four days, or your fever goes away then returns after two or three days.
- A child with shaking chills with a cough or nighttime cough spasms

Tips for OTC Cold & Flu Medicines

OTC medicines do not cure colds or the flu, but they can ease your symptoms and help you feel better. Remember, they are serious medicines:

- Read and follow the directions on the labels carefully. Check age recommendations on children's products. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cautions against the use of cough and cold medicines in **children under 4 years of age**, unless recommended by a health care provider.
- Know what's in your OTC medicine. Some common ingredients like aspirin, acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol), and ibuprofen (e.g., Advil, Motrin) are in a wide variety of both OTC and prescription products, so make sure you aren't taking multiple medicines with the same ingredients.
- Do not give **aspirin** or products containing aspirin to persons under **20 years of age**.

Selected OTC cold and flu medicines available at your Kaiser Permanente pharmacy:

Product List	Symptoms Treated				
	Stuffy Nose	Runny Nose	Cough	Aches, Fever	Sore Throat
<i>Please read and follow label directions carefully. For children's products, observe the age limitations.</i>					
Nasal decongestants and combinations					
■ Pseudoephedrine* Tabs 30 mg, 60 mg (Sudafed)	✓				
Children's Liquid 15 mg/5ml	✓				
■ Phenylephrine Tabs 10 mg (Sudafed PE)	✓				
■ Triprolidine/Pseudoephedrine* Tabs (Actifed)	✓	✓			
■ Children's Dimetapp Cold & Cough Liquid	✓	✓	✓		
■ Saline Nose Spray (Ocean)	✓				
■ Oxymetazoline Nose Spray 0.05% (Afrin) (do not use more than 3 days in a row)	✓				
Cough suppressants and expectorants					
■ Guaifenesin Syrup 100 mg/5 ml (Robitussin)			✓		
Tabs 400 mg (Fenesin IR)			✓		
Long-Acting Tabs 600 mg (Mucinex)			✓		
■ Guaifenesin/Dextromethorphan Syrup (Robitussin DM)**			✓		
Tabs (Mucinex DM)			✓		
■ Guaifenesin/Pseudoephedrine* Liquid, Tabs (Mucinex D)	✓		✓		
■ Dextromethorphan Syrup—12 hr formula (Delsym)**			✓		
Pain relievers and fever reducers					
■ Acetaminophen Tabs 325 mg, 500 mg (Tylenol)				✓	✓
Children's Chews/Melts 80 mg, Jr. Tabs 160 mg				✓	✓
Children's Drops 80 mg/0.8 ml, Elixir 160 mg/5 ml				✓	✓
■ Ibuprofen Tabs 200 mg (Advil)				✓	✓
Children's Liquid 100 mg (Children's Advil)				✓	✓
■ Throat Lozenges, Throat Spray (Cepacol, Chloraseptic)					✓

*Please ask pharmacy staff for assistance with products containing pseudoephedrine.

**Dextromethorphan (DXM) has become a popular medication of abuse, especially among adolescents. For more information, please see www.doseofprevention.org.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or further questions, please talk with your physician or health care provider.