

Fact sheet No.12



Easy Read

Common Cold



This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if you get a sore throat.

It also tells you when you should become concerned and see your doctor.

What is the common cold?

You may have a cold when you:

- Have a blocked and then runny nose





- Are sneezing



- Have a cough



- Have a sore throat



- Have a temperature



- Are feeling generally unwell

A common cold is caused by a **viral infection**.



Viral means it is caused by a **Virus**.

A **Virus** is a bug that gets into your body and makes you ill. Usually there is no treatment and you get better in a few days.



An **Infection** is a disease in part of your body.



How dangerous are colds?

Colds are harmless.

In most cases they get better by themselves.



How common are they?

Colds are very common. Adults get an average of two to four colds a year.



Can it lead to something worse?

No, it is very unusual for a cold to lead to something worse.



Will I need antibiotics?

Most colds get better on their own without treatment.

Antibiotics can't help and may make things worse.



An **antibiotic** is a type of medicine or tablet that is used to cure certain types of disease.



What if I smoke?

Your cold may be worse if you smoke and may last longer.

What should happen?



How long will it last?

In adults and older children, it will usually last for about a week and a half.



In younger children it might last for two weeks.



It is usually worst in the first two to three days.



Coughs may last up to three weeks.



There is no cure

We have no cure for the common cold.

Catching a cold

We can catch a cold by either:



- Breathing in droplets of fluid containing the cold virus - like when someone sneezes



- By touching something that someone has sneezed on, and then touching our mouth or nose.

What can I do myself to get better?



Simple measures

Get some rest until you feel better.

You will know when you are well.



Diet and fluids

Eat healthily, including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.



Drink a lot. You need to replace the liquid you have lost from sweating and a runny nose.



Over the counter medicines

You can take paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin.



Don't give aspirin to children under the age of 16.



Always follow the instructions with the medicines.



Talk to your pharmacist about other things that might help.

When should I seek medical help?



Most colds are not serious and get better by themselves.



Contact your local doctor (GP) surgery for urgent advice if you notice any of these things:

- You have a very high temperature (above 39°C or 102.2°F)



- You start feeling confused



- You have a sharp pain in your chest



- You cough up blood



- You find it difficult to breathe



- You have swelling of the glands in your neck or armpits



- Your cold lasts longer than three weeks.

Where can I find out more?



NHS Choices

Web: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Cold-common/Pages/Introduction.aspx



Choose Well

Web: www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk/self-care

Remember that your pharmacist can also help you.



Self Care Forum

Helping people take care of themselves

This information comes from the Self Care Forum

Contact us on:



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