
Upper Respiratory Infection (Common cold)



What You Need to Know

What is an Upper Respiratory Infection?

An Upper Respiratory Infection (URI), also known as the common cold, is caused by a virus. The virus inflames the membranes in the nose, throat, and upper airway. There are more than 200 different viruses that cause an Upper Respiratory Infection.

Who can get Upper Respiratory Infection?

URI is most common in children under the age of 6. However, anyone at any age can be infected.

What are the symptoms of Upper Respiratory Infection?

Symptoms include runny nose, congestion, sneezing, cough, watery eyes and sore throat.

How long after exposure do symptoms first begin?

Symptoms begin within 12 hours to 5 days, but usually 48 hours after exposure.

How is Upper Respiratory Infection spread?

URI viruses are spread by direct contact with an infected person and objects, like toys or keyboards that are contaminated with the virus. URI is also spread through the air when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes.

How long is a person contagious?

A person can be contagious several hours before onset of illness and up to 5 days after symptoms begin.

Are there complications of Upper Respiratory Infection?

URI is usually a mild illness; however complications can include ear infection, sinus infection, pneumonia, and throat infection.

Is there a treatment for Upper Respiratory Infection?

Antibiotics are not effective against viral Upper Respiratory Infection. Get bed rest and drink plenty of fluids. Consult your physician before using over-the-counter medications or if symptoms do not improve.

How can Upper Respiratory Infection be prevented?

- Avoid contact with sick people whenever possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after coughing, sneezing or touching common surfaces like door knobs, keyboards and telephones. You can also use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Use soap and running water
- Rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- Wash all surfaces, including:
 - backs of hands
 - wrists
 - between fingers
 - under fingernails
- Rinse well
- Dry hands with a paper towel
- Turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands



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