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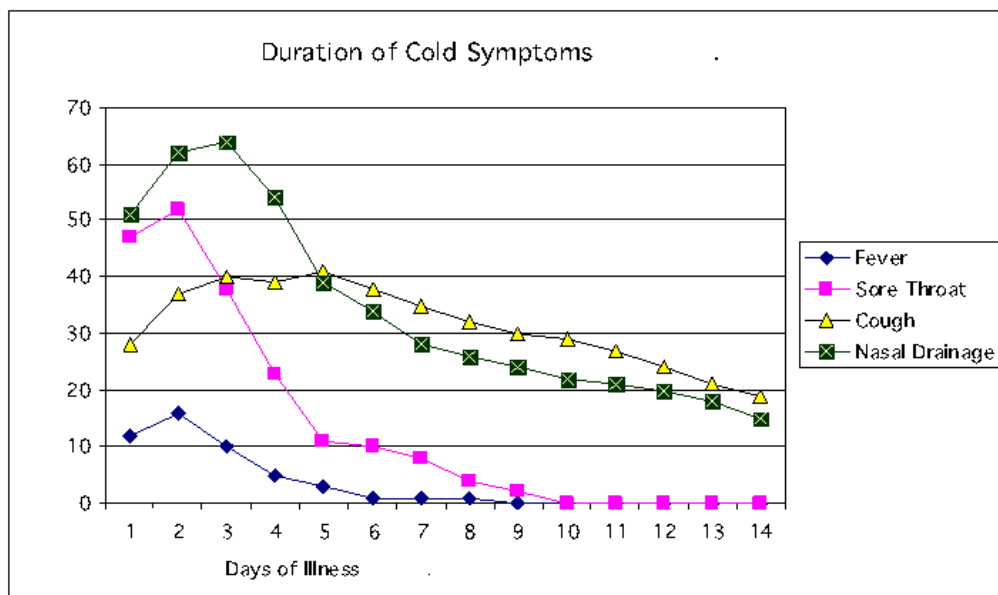
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## WINTER WELLNESS

Many factors play a role in the development of the common cold. Although it is certain that a virus is the last straw precipitating a cold, many other factors make a clinical infection more likely. We are all exposed to numerous viruses, but we are at certain times more or less susceptible depending on the status of our body's natural resistance. Factors such as dry nasal linings from forced air heating or relative dehydration from caffeinated and alcoholic beverages are commonly found.

Almost all cases (98%) of new onset purulent nasal discharge are due to viruses, not bacteria. Antibiotics are ineffective against viruses. The severity of symptoms and the color of the discharge (clear, yellow, or green) are of no help distinguishing between bacterial or viral infection. The only reliable factor to reliably distinguish between viral and bacterial nasal infections is the duration of symptoms. Colds that have not improved after 10 to 14 days or have worsened after 5 to 7 days start increasing the risk of a bacterial infection.



Since there are no direct cure for viral infections in the nose, we must rely on the body's natural resistance (immune system) to help prevent these infections or shorten the duration and severity of a viral illness when it occurs. Below are some helpful suggestions for prevention when you are at higher risk as well as when you feel a cold may be starting.

### Handwashing

Germs are everywhere! They can get onto hands and items we touch during daily activities and make you sick. Cleaning hands at key times with soap and water or hand sanitizer is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to those around you. It involves five simple and effective steps (Wet, Lather, Scrub, Rinse, Dry) you can take to reduce the spread of respiratory illness so you can stay healthy.

### Hydration and Nasal Moisturization

Keeping the nasal linings moist by drinking more fluids is extremely beneficial. You should avoid caffeinated

beverages, which dehydrate the body and nose. Use of nasal saline sprays keeps the nose moist. A moist nose is able to sweep all irritants and particles on its membranes into the throat to be swallowed every 10 minutes. When the nose is dry, this self-cleaning mechanism is impaired. Irritants and viruses thereby have more time to irritate or gain entry to the membranes and cause infection. If you have pre-existing conditions in the nose (nasal allergy, septal deviation, sinusitis, etc.) or impaired resistance (diabetes, chronic disease, etc.), it may be necessary to assist the nose in maintaining normal hygiene with high-volume nasal saline irrigations (See *Nasal Saline Irrigation* handout).

### **Stress Reduction and Exercise**

It is a known fact that stress weakens your body's immune system. Exercise is the perfect antidote. It helps strengthen the body and alleviates the body's mental and physical stress. Adequate sleep is also essential in maintaining normal immunity.

### **Vitamin C**

Vitamin C boosts the immune system. The suggested dosage varies between 500-4,000 mg each day. It seems reasonable to stay on regular doses during cold season, while increasing the dose when symptoms first appear.

### **Zinc Vitamin**

Certain over-the-counter formulations of zinc have been proven to significantly shorten the duration and severity of the common cold. The exact reason is still unknown. However, not all zinc lozenges are effective. This seems to be related to the use of formulations that do not allow the release of ionized zinc into the oral cavity. Please keep in mind that zinc therapy is not recommended for children.

### **Echinacea Purpurea Root and Goldenseal Herbal Remedies**

This herbal treatment stimulates natural resistance by boosting the immune system. This is available over-the-counter but should not be taken for longer than two weeks at a time.

### **Oscillococcinum Homeopathy**

Manufactured by Boiron, Oscillococcinum has a long history of efficacy and safety. Four clinical studies, including two which have been published in peer-reviewed journals, show that Oscillococcinum reduces the severity and duration of flu-like symptoms such as feeling run down, headache, body aches, chills and fever. It relieves flu-like symptoms such as feeling run down, headache, body aches, chills and fever. For adults and children two years of age and older, dissolve entire contents of one tube in the mouth every six hours, up to three times a day.

### **Winter Balance II and Winter Tonic Plus Homeopathy**

Winter Balance II and Winter Tonic Plus ([www.cellestech.com](http://www.cellestech.com)) may be taken together on a weekly basis during the cold and flu season, and increased at the first signs of a respiratory infection.

### **Antibiotics**

Antibiotics do not work on viruses, such as those that cause colds, flu, bronchitis, or runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green. Antibiotics will not make you feel better if you have a virus. Respiratory viruses usually go away in a week or two without treatment. Antibiotics are only needed for treating infections caused by bacteria, but even some bacterial infections get better without antibiotics, including many sinus infections and some ear infections. Antibiotics aren't always the answer. Everyone can help improve antibiotic prescribing and use. When a patient needs an antibiotic, the benefits must outweigh the risks of side effects or antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics can save lives if used appropriately and are critical tools for treating life-threatening conditions such as pneumonia and sepsis. If you are prescribed antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed.

### **Decongestants**

Topical decongestants, such as over the counter oxymetazoline nasal spray, for up to three days during a nasal infection can reduce drainage and symptoms without significant side effects. However, longer use may actually increase nasal congestion due to a rebound phenomenon. Use of oral decongestant tablets should be avoided and only use sparingly since this medication raises blood pressure and increases the risk of a bacterial sinus infection by dehydrating the sinuses, thickening the viscosity and increasing the stagnation of sinus mucus which actually impairs your natural immune mechanisms.