Sore Throat and Respiratory Symptom Self-care

Symptoms May Include:

- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Runny or congested nose
- Cough
- Blocked or popping ears
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Post nasal drip
- Headaches

Sore Throat Care

- Gargle with salt water several times a day for throat discomfort (1/4 teaspoon regular salt to 1/2 cup warm water)
- Sip warm chicken broth
- Try warm tea with lemon and honey, apple juice, gelatin, or sucking on flavored ice
- Take frequent small sips if it is painful to swallow
- Use cough drops, hard candy, or frozen popsicles for additional relief
- Saline nasal spray (Ocean®, Deep Sea®, etc.) to moisturize nasal passages. Use as needed
- Nasal/Sinus Irrigation (Sinus Rinse®, NetiPot®) Relieves sinus and nasal congestion and promotes drainage.

General things you can do to make yourself feel better:

- Rest and Increase your fluid intake
- If you smoke, stop smoking while ill
- Increase humidity of your living space with a vaporizer or humidifier
- Breathe in steam (hot shower)

Contact Health & Wellness if:

- Temperature is greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit. Thermometers are available for purchase at the Health & Wellness Pharmacy.
- Your symptoms become more severe
- Your symptoms do not improve
- You have questions
- You feel you need to be seen by a medical provider

About Medications

Many illnesses including “colds” are caused by viruses; antibiotics only affect bacteria, not viruses. To help relieve symptoms, many non-prescription medications are available in the Health & Wellness Pharmacy.

Remember:

Wash your hands frequently and cover your mouth/nose with your sleeve when you sneeze or cough to help prevent the spread germs and bacteria.

IMPORTANT

You should always “read the directions” on all non-prescription medications, including those listed here, to ensure:

- **correct dosing**
- **awareness of any warnings related to the non-prescription medication**
- **possible interactions with the medications you take on a daily basis**
- **possible interactions with any health conditions you may have.**

(OVER)

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Cold and Flu Medications

OTCs are medicines used to treat common symptoms, such as headaches or stuffy noses and they can be purchased without a prescription. The table below lists the different types and names of common OTC medicines available as well as what they do. Please choose the right medicine for your situation and avoid combination medicines, such as Dayquil, when possible.

MEDICATION TYPE	SYMPTOMS RELIEVED	HOW THEY WORK	MEDICATION NAMES	PRECAUTIONS
DECONGESTANTS (ORAL)	Relieve stuffy nose, postnasal drip, and decrease ear pressure	Constricts blood vessels in nasal passage, leading to less mucus production	Pseudoephedrine (most effective). e.g. SUDAFED Phenylephrine (less effective). e.g. SUDAFED PE	May cause increased heart rate, sleep disturbance, elevated blood pressure. Need to ask for pseudoephedrine from pharmacist. Never use if you are a singer as it can cause vocal cord injury.
DECONGESTANTS (INTRANASAL)	Relieve stuffy nose, postnasal drip, and decrease ear pressure	Directly constricts nasal blood vessels and reduces nasal swelling	Oxymetazoline. e.g. Afrin	Never use longer than 3 days as that can cause chronic congestion. Less likely to cause side effects as listed above.
EXPECTORANTS	Thin mucus and make coughs more productive with less discomfort. It does not stop coughing.	Makes mucus looser	Guaifenesin, e.g., Mu-cinex or Robitussin	May cause headache or nausea. Need to drink lots of water for it to be effective.
COUGH SUPPRESSANTS	Reduce the frequency of coughing.	These do not eliminate all coughing. They are effective at reducing the frequency of coughing.	Dextromethorphan, e.g., Delsym. Also, any multi-symptom medicine followed by DM e.g. Robitussin DM.	Can cause drowsiness. Do not combine with alcohol.
ANTIHISTAMINES (SEDATING)	Reduces nasal congestion. Treats sudden allergic symptoms, rashes, and related itchiness. Used as a sleep aid.	By blocking the allergy (histamine) receptors, antihistamines reduce mucus production and nasal swelling.	Diphenhydramine, e.g., Benadryl Chlorpheniramine, e.g., Chlortrimeton	These will often cause sleepiness, dry eyes, and dry mouth. Used only when needed.
ANTIHISTAMINES (NON-SEDATING)	Control symptoms of seasonal allergies; runny nose, itchy, water eyes	As above, but much less likely to cause sleepiness.	Loratadine, e.g., Claritin Cetirizine, e.g., Zyrtec Fexofenadine, e.g., Allegra	Less potent than sedating antihistamines. Less likely to cause drowsiness. Often used as daily allergy medicine.
PAIN RELIEVERS / FEVER REDUCERS (Acetaminophen)	Decrease pain. Reduce fever.	Works for headaches and other minor aches or pains. Will reduce fevers associated with colds, flu, and other infections, illnesses.	Acetaminophen, e.g., Tylenol	Well tolerated at recommended dose. Can cause liver damage at higher doses or if combined with alcohol.
PAIN RELIEVERS / FEVER REDUCERS (Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drug – NSAID)	Decrease pain. Reduce fever.	Stronger pain medicine than Acetaminophen. Helps reduce swelling in muscles and joints. Very effective at reducing fevers.	Ibuprofen, e.g., Motrin, Advil Naproxen, e.g., Aleve	Can cause nausea, stomach discomfort, or gastrointestinal bleeding. Should not be combined with alcohol.

Many multi-symptom medications such as Nyquil, Dayquil, Tylenol Cold and others contain several medications, including Acetaminophen (Tylenol), or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), decongestants, and antihistamines. It is very important that you read labels to avoid using duplicate ingredients or types of medicines. *Be aware that many of these combination medicines contain alcohol.*

University of New Hampshire
Health & Wellness

For more information contact a Health & Wellness Health Resource Nurse at (603) 862-2856

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