



## Health Yourself Byte

### REMEDIES FOR THE COMMON COLD



If you catch a cold, you can expect to be sick for about a week . . . but, that doesn't mean that you have to be miserable. These remedies may help:

1. **WATER and OTHER FLUIDS:** Water, juice, clear broth or warm lemon water with honey can help loosen congestion and prevents dehydration. Try to avoid coffee and caffeinated sodas which can make dehydration worse.
2. **SALT WATER:** A saltwater gargle (1/2 teaspoon salt in an 8 oz glass of warm water can temporarily relieve a sore or scratchy throat.
3. **SALINE NASAL SPRAYS:** Over-the-counter saline nasal sprays combat stuffiness and congestions. Unlike nasal decongestants, saline sprays don't lead to a rebound effect – a worsening of symptoms when the medication is discontinued. Most are safe and nonirritating even for children.
4. **CHICKEN SOUP:** Scientists have put chicken soup to the test and determined that it does seem to help relieve cold and flu symptoms in 2 ways: First, it acts as an anti-inflammatory by inhibiting the movement of “neutrophils” (immune system cells that participate in the body's inflammatory response). Second, it temporarily speeds up the movement of mucus through the nose, helping to relieve congestion and limiting the amount of time viruses are in contact with the nose lining. Most canned chicken soups work just as well as soups made from scratch!
5. **OVER-THE COUNTER (OTC) COLD MEDICATIONS:** Nonprescription decongestants and pain relievers offer some symptom relief, but they don't prevent a cold or shorten its duration . . . and most have side effects. Read the labels carefully.
6. **HUMIDITY:** Cold viruses thrive in dry conditions which is another reason colds are more common in the winter! Parched air dries mucus membranes causing a stuffy nose and scratchy throat. A humidifier can add moisture to your home. Change the water in your humidifier daily and clean the unit at least once every 3 days.

### COLD REMEDIES THAT DON'T WORK:

1. **ANTIBIOTICS:** These kill bacteria but they are no help against cold viruses. Inappropriate use of antibiotics contribute to the serious and growing problem of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in this country!
2. **ANTIHISTAMINES:** Antihistamines can help the runny nose, watery eyes and sneezing that occur with allergies but they have the opposite effect on cold symptoms by further drying nasal membranes and impeding the flow of mucus.
3. **OTC COUGH SYRUPS:** The American College of Chest Physicians strongly discourage the use of these medications because they're ineffective at treating the underlying cause of cough due to colds. Some contain ingredients that may alleviate coughing, but the amounts are too small to do much good and may actually be harmful for children younger than 14.
4. **NOT EATING:** There's no evidence that avoiding food shortens a cold's duration or reduces symptoms!



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