

# Self-Care Guidance for Upper Respiratory Infections (cold, flu, etc)

## What are the symptoms of common Upper Respiratory Infections?

- Influenza A/B (Flu):** Body aches, cough (often dry, painful), fever (100.5-104), congestion, significant fatigue
- Rhinovirus (common cold):** Runny nose/congestion, slight fever, mild sore throat
- Strep Throat:** sore throat with pus on tonsils, fever, body aches, stomach symptoms (usually no cough or runny nose present)
- Adenovirus:** Same as Influenza, but add severe sore throat and pink eye
- RSV:** Same as Influenza
- COVID:** variable, but often includes cough, sore throat, sinus pressure, change in taste/smell, fever

*Unfortunately, most Upper Respiratory Infections are related to these viruses*

**\*\*\*VIRAL INFECTIONS DO NOT RESPOND TO ANTIBIOTICS\*\*\***

*Masks and good handwashing help prevent spread of all of the above*

## What can I do to feel better?

- Rest:** Your body needs more rest and sleep when you are not well. Avoid staying up late, stop any vigorous exercise.
- Nourish Yourself:** If you have an appetite, try to choose foods that are nutritious. Chicken, soups, eggs, yogurt, etc. are good choices.
- Stay Hydrated:** When you are sick, your body needs more water to thin out secretions. Fevers are dehydrating. Push yourself to drink at least 64 oz of water (or more) each day.
- Immune Boosting Vitamins:** Elderberry can decrease viral replication in Flu A, and can help fend off some other viral illnesses. Zinc, Vitamin D, and Umcka are supplements that have been proven helpful for cold and flu treatment/prevention.
- Also Helpful:** saltwater gargles, honey sticks, cough drops, bouillon, soup, tea, Gatorade, Vicks

## Over the counter meds to treat your symptoms:

- Body Aches/ Sore Throat / Headache:** Acetaminophen 1000mg every 6 hours (*max dose 4000mg/24hr*)  
Ibuprofen 400mg every 6 hours (*max dose 2400mg/24hr*)
- Runny Nose/Congestion:** Afrin nasal spray, every 12 hours for **NO MORE THAN 3 days**  
pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) instructions per label
- Sinus pressure/Ear pressure:** Nasal Steroid sprays (Flonase, Nasocort) can help reduce inflammation in the passageways that drain your ears and sinuses. Using them daily can be good prevention for sinus/ear infections that sometimes follow viral illnesses. Nasal rinsing (neti-pot, NeilMed) can also be very helpful.
- Cough:** Dextromethorphan (Delsym) is good OTC treatment for cough suppression. It may cause drowsiness.
- Multi-symptom cold and Flu:** Theraflu, Dayquil/Nyquil, Advil Cold and Sinus often combine several of the medications listed above. (*Take care not to duplicate medications*)

## Clues that it might NOT be viral:

- Localized pain without lots of other symptoms (i.e., ear, sinus only)
- Worsening symptoms after 7 days of illness
- Fever persisting beyond 3-4 days
- Cough productive of foul smelling/opaque phlegm (color is not a helpful indicator)

- If you have questions or concerns, please see a nurse, or call *TimelyCare, (24/7 Virtual Medical Care)* →
- Contact *TimelyCare* if you cannot get an on-campus appointment or it is after hours.

*\*All full-time Messiah undergrads have access to TimelyCare\**

## Reasons to be seen in person:

- Persistent productive cough (bringing up phlegm with most coughing episodes)
- *Significant* ear pain
- *Severe* sore throat
- Temperature over 101 that does not improve with medication
- Known exposure to or strong suspicion of bacterial illness (like Strep)

## When to skip the Campus Health Center (Emergency Symptoms):

- Chest pain (911)
- Difficulty Breathing (ER)
- Fainting/Seizures (ER/911)
- Severe headache (worst of your life) or neck pain (ER)

**Engle Center Health Services**

**Hours: Monday-Friday 8-5 pm**

**Phone: 717-691-6035**

**FOR ASSISTANCE WITH ON-CAMPUS EMERGENCIES, CALL DISPATCH AT ext.6005**

