

RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS

Manage your symptoms

You have an infection of the ear, nose, throat, sinuses and/or chest, most likely caused by a virus. Antibiotics don't work against viral infections. Antibiotics won't make you feel better or recover faster.

What is a respiratory tract infection?

A respiratory tract infection is an infection anywhere in the respiratory tract (ie, the nose, throat and lungs). Your respiratory tract infection is most likely caused by a virus; antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses.

How can I treat a viral respiratory tract infection?

Most coughs, earaches, sinus congestion problems and sore throats get better without antibiotics. Colds rarely cause serious harm, but they can still make you feel unwell. The good news is that colds usually get better in 7 to 10 days, although a cough can last up to 3 weeks and there are things you can do to feel better.

Contact your doctor

Contact your doctor if you don't begin to feel better after a few days, your symptoms worsen, new symptoms develop or you get side effects.

A respiratory tract infection can make an ongoing medical condition — such as asthma or diabetes — worse. Contact your doctor if this happens.

Additional advice and actions

What can you do?

Rest

- ☐ Allow your immune system to fight off the virus.

Use home remedies

- ☐ Gargle warm salty water.
- ☐ Suck on an ice cube or lozenge as needed.
- ☐ Have a soothing drink (eg, honey & lemon).
- ☐ Apply moisturiser to soothe dry skin of the nose.
- ☐ Inhale steam from the shower. Don't inhale steam from a bowl of hot water because of the risk of burns.

Use symptom-relieving medicines

- ☐ Use a decongestant nasal spray or drops.*
- ☐ Use saline nasal spray or drops.
- ☐ Take a decongestant tablet or mixture.*
- ☐ Take a non-prescription pain reliever medicine.

*Should not be given to children < 6 years of age & should only be given to children aged 6 to 11 years on the advice of a doctor, pharmacist or nurse practitioner.

Prevent the spread of infection

- ☐ Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- ☐ Clean your hands after blowing your nose.

For more information

Visit the NPS MedicineWise website:

www.nps.org.au/rtis