

WHAT CAN I DO WHEN I HAVE A COLD OR SINUS SYMPTOMS?

Colds, bronchitis, and most sinus infections are caused by viruses, for which antibiotics don't work. Your immune system will get rid of the viral infection on its own. White blood cells, which help to fight off the virus, cause the yellow/green mucus you may cough up or blow out your nose. This is not an indication of a bacterial infection. Symptoms from viral illnesses usually start improving after 7-10 days, and last about 2 weeks. Coughs can linger another couple of weeks. Symptoms often last longer in persons who smoke or have underlying allergies or breathing conditions. If your symptoms last beyond the time expected, you have a fever >101 degrees F, or you experience shortness of breath, you should be seen by a clinician for further evaluation.

There is limited evidence that a few “natural” products might shorten the duration and/or decrease the severity of cold symptoms if started soon after symptoms start, preferably on the first day as below:

- Pelargonium sidoides extract (Brand name Umcka ColdCare from Nature's Way) 1.5mL 3 times daily has been shown to decrease severity and shorten duration of symptoms if started within first 1-2 days.
- Vitamin C at high doses (~8g/day) when started on the first day of cold symptoms, seems to shorten the duration and lessen the severity of symptoms. Previous studies with lower doses did not find a benefit. Nausea and diarrhea can be a side effect of high doses of Vitamin C. Dividing the daily dose into four 2g doses throughout the day should help decrease this. Stop the Vitamin C once cold symptoms improve.
- Zinc lozenges with frequent dosing (75-90mg/day zinc, 6-8 lozenges/day depending upon brand) has been shown to shorten duration of cold, and maybe the severity of symptoms, if started within 24 hours; however, it frequently causes nausea and bad taste in mouth.

To help manage cold or sinus symptoms consider the following:

- For nasal, ear, and/or sinus congestion use 12-hour nasal decongestant spray (Afrin, or generic equivalent) 2-3 sprays each nostril 1-2 times daily until symptoms improved (no longer than 3 days at twice daily, 5 days at once daily). If nose feels dry or notice bloody mucus, use saline nasal spray as often as needed.
- For sore throat, fever, headaches, or body aches, take ibuprofen 400-600mg up to 2400mg/day.
- For cough, use cough lozenges and/or honey 1-2 tsp as needed.



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