

The Haven Practice

COLDS

Colds are caused by a virus growing in the nose, throat and sinuses.

They are usually caught by touching infected surfaces such as light switches or door handles and also from droplets in the air, caused by coughing and sneezing.

It is normal for children to get up to ten colds in a year. Adults may suffer up to four colds in a year.

Symptoms:

- Blocked/runny nose
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Headache
- Tired
- Slight fever (below 38C)

Treatment:

Most colds will get better on their own as your body develops immunity and builds up infection. It usually takes about a week to get over a cold. Antibiotics will NOT help as they only treat bacterial infections and are useless against viruses.

Self Help:

- Rest to allow your body to concentrate on fighting infection
- Drink plenty of fluids To prevent dehydration
- Steam inhalation To help blocked nose
- Warm damp air To help tickly cough
(Turn down heating or hang damp towels on radiator)
- Tissues with menthol
- Moisturisers To help sore/blocked nose
- Gargle salt water To ease sore throat
- Sucking sweets/ice lolly to ease sore throat/blocked sinuses
- Don't smoke yourself or to stop aggravating symptoms

Medicines:

Remember the pharmacist can always advise you.

Paracetamol and Ibuprofen may be helpful for pain and fever. Remember there may be Paracetamol in any cold remedy drinks i.e. Lemsip. Do not double up on medication.

Decongestants come in tablet form and may help to unblock your nose. They also come in nasal sprays or drops. Decongestants are not recommended for children.

Saline drops may help to unblock noses. These can be very useful for babies before a feed.

Antihistamines may reduced runny nose and sneezing.

Local anaesthetic sprays or lozenges can help to ease a sore throat. Not recommended for young children.

Complementary medicine:

There is limited evidence that taking Vitamin C supplement may reduce the length of a cold. Stick to the recommended dose as too much can give you diarrhoea.

Also limited evidence that Echinacea may reduce your symptoms.

Complications of a cold:

Occasionally colds can develop complications:

- Shortness of breath
- Temperature over 38C
- Skin rash
- Cough with phlegm that is either yellow/green or rust coloured
- Uncontrollable cough or cough that makes you gag/vomit
- Difficulty staying awake
- Photophobia
- Neck stiffness