

Cold - The Common Misery

Nearly 200 viruses can cause a cold, and they can live for hours on objects, surfaces, and people. When you touch something contaminated with a cold virus, and then touch your eyes or nose, you transmit the virus to your body. There is no cure for the common cold. It usually goes away in 5 to 7 days. Antibiotics cannot kill viruses and should only be used to treat secondary bacterial infections, such as sinus or ear infections. Taking large doses of vitamin C has not been proven to prevent colds but may reduce its severity and duration. Excessive amounts of vitamin C (more than 1000mg a day) can cause diarrhea, kidney stones, gout, and other health related problems. Some over-the-counter cold products can help ease a few of the discomforts but they cannot cure the illness. If you have high blood pressure, diabetes, hyperthyroid, or asthma condition, check with your doctor before purchasing any over-the-counter cold products.

The most important thing you can do for your cold is to take good care of yourself. The following are some tips:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Gargle with salt water for a sore throat.
- ($\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt in 1-cup warm water).
- Always blow, cough, or sneeze into a facial tissue.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Use a steam vaporizer or cool-mist humidifier.
- Do not smoke.
- Don't share personal items.

See your doctor if:

- Your cold lasts longer than 2 weeks.
- Your temperature is over 101° F or you have chills.
- You cough up yellow, green, or gray mucus.
- You have chest pain or shortness of breath.
- You have an earache
- You have a severe headache with a stiff neck.