

UPPER RESPIRATORY & SINUS INFECTIONS (Sore Throats & Colds)

It is RARE that you should EVER have to go to an emergency room for a cold, sinus infection, or sore throat. Many of these infections are from a virus and do not even need an antibiotic.

Symptoms of these types of infections include sore throat, pain when swallowing, fever, swollen or tender neck glands, runny nose, sinus congestion or drainage, hoarseness, sneezing, cough, muscle aches or joint pain. Home treatment may relieve symptoms until you can call my office for further instructions.

- Drink plenty of fluids to help keep your mucus thin.
- Apply moist heat (using a hot, damp towel) to your face for 5-10 minutes, several times a day.
- Breathe warm, moist air from a steamy shower, a hot bath, or a sink filled with hot water. Avoid very cool dry air. Consider using a humidifier to increase the moisture in your home.
- Use saltwater nasal washes (saline) to help keep the nasal passages open and wash out mucus. You can gargle with warm salt water. This can help with sore throat or postnasal drainage.
- If you need to blow your nose, do it gently. Forceful blowing may force thick mucus back into your sinuses and block them. **Keep both nostrils open when blowing your nose.**
- Avoid alcohol (beer, wine, and liquor). It causes swelling in the lining of the nose and sinuses.
- Try over-the-counter medicines to relieve pain or stuffy nose. Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label. Do not use the medicine longer than the label says.
- Avoid smoking or being around smoke.

Medicines available without a prescription may help relieve pain and promote sinus drainage, help with sore throat, improve cough and help with muscle aches and joint pain. Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label. You can:

- Try a pain reliever such as Tylenol® or acetaminophen to relieve facial pain, muscle aches, joint pain and headache.
- For a stuffy nose, use a nasal spray or drops. There's a decongestant kind (like Afrin, Dristan, or Neo-Synephrine) and a steroid spray kind (like Nasacort). Don't use the decongestant kind longer than the label says. Overuse can cause rebound stuffiness. It makes your mucous membranes swell up more than before you used the spray if you use it for too long.
- Try an oral decongestant for a stuffy nose or head. It provides longer relief than the ones that are used in the nose, but it may cause more side effects. Use caution and talk to your pharmacist if you have high blood pressure or heart problems before using a decongestant.
- Try using a medicine that thins mucus and improves sinus drainage (this is called a mucolytic). Guaifenesin (like Mucinex or Robitussin) is a common mucolytic. Mucolytics are often combined with cough suppressants (like Mucinex DM or Robitussin DM).
- Cough drops can help keep your throat moist and sometimes help with sore throat pain.

Like I said earlier, be careful with cough and cold medicines. They may not be safe for people who have certain health problems, so check the label first. If you do use these medicines, always follow the directions.