



## Home Care Or Doctors Office?

One of the best ways to prevent a cold or the flu is to wash your hands frequently and keep them away from your eyes, nose and mouth.

**Physicians and other health care professionals are skilled in treating thousands of complex acute and chronic conditions. However, physicians often end up seeing patients for conditions that do not necessarily require a doctor's expertise.**

### Helping Yourself

The next time you or someone in your family has cold or flu symptoms, try the following home care techniques. It may save you a trip to the doctor's office and the expense of a visit or insurance copayment.

- Take aspirin, acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve headache, muscle aches and fever.
- Rest at home.
- Drink plenty of clear liquids.
- If you have a cough or are congested, a humidifier or hot shower can help you breathe more easily.
- A warm washcloth on your forehead and over your eyes can help relieve sinus congestion.

If you use over-the-counter medications to treat symptoms of a cold or the flu, follow the label directions carefully. A medicine may interact or interfere with other medications you are taking or can be a health risk for those with certain medical conditions.

### When to Call a Doctor

The following guidelines can help you determine when it is appropriate to seek your doctor's advice for cold and flu-like symptoms. If you have even a slight concern that your condition is serious, consult a medical professional immediately.

#### Sore Throat

- It lasts more than 48 hours.
- Your throat is bright red, swollen, or has white spots or a rough red rash—especially if you have been exposed to someone with strep throat.

#### Congestion

- Your runny nose or nasal congestion lasts for more than 10 days.
- Nasal discharge is yellow or green and continues all day.
- You experience severe facial pain or headache.

#### Cough

- It lasts for more than 10 days.
- It is severe, painful and produces thick, bloody or green mucous.
- You experience chest pain when you breathe, or have difficulty breathing through your mouth.

#### Earache

- Ear pain is severe.
- You have discharge from one or both ears.
- You experience ear pain or problems for more than a week.

#### Fever

- You have a temperature of 101° F or more.
- Your fever persists for more than four days.
- You experience chills, shortness of breath, soaking sweats or mental confusion.
- A fever of more than 100° F starts after the third day of your illness.

#### Abdominal Pain

- You experience persistent pain in your abdomen or rectum, or localized pain in the abdomen.
- You have black or bloody stools or vomit, or your vomit resembles coffee grounds.
- You have more than eight bowel movements per day.