



ENT Tips

Common Cold

More than 200 different types of viruses can cause a cold. The three most frequent symptoms of a cold are nasal stuffiness, sneezing, and runny nose. Throat irritation is also often involved. Adults and older children with colds generally have minimal or no fever. Infants and toddlers often run a fever in the 100 to 102 degree range. Depending on which virus is the culprit, the virus might also produce a headache, cough, postnasal drip, burning eyes, muscle aches, or a decreased appetite, but in a cold, the most prominent symptoms are in the nose. Once you have "caught" a cold, the symptoms begin in one to five days. Usually irritation in the nose or a scratchy feeling in the throat is the first sign, followed within hours by sneezing and a watery nasal discharge. The entire cold is usually over all by itself in about seven days, with perhaps a few lingering symptoms (cough) for another week or two. If it lasts longer without signs of improvement, consider another problem, such as a sinus infection or allergies.

Sinusitis

Acute bacterial sinusitis is an infection of the sinus cavities caused by bacteria. It usually is preceded by a cold, allergy attack, or irritation by environmental pollutants. Unlike a cold or allergy, bacterial sinusitis requires a physician's diagnosis and may require treatment with an antibiotic to cure the infection and prevent future complications. Normally, mucus collecting in the sinuses drains into the nasal passages. When you have a cold or allergy attack, your sinuses become inflamed and may be unable to drain. This can lead to infection. Diagnosis of acute sinusitis usually is based on a physical examination and a discussion of your symptoms. When you have frequent sinusitis, or the infection lasts three months or more, it could be chronic sinusitis. Symptoms of chronic sinusitis may be less severe than those of acute; however, more than 200 different types of viruses can cause a cold. The three most frequent symptoms of a cold are nasal stuffiness, sneezing, and runny nose. Throat irritation is also often involved. Adults and older children with colds generally have minimal or no fever. Infants and toddlers often run a fever in the 100 to 102 degree range. Depending on which virus is the culprit, the virus might also produce a headache, cough, postnasal drip, burning eyes, muscle aches, or a decreased appetite, but in a cold, the most prominent symptoms are in the nose. Once you have "caught" a cold, the symptoms begin in one to five days. Usually irritation in the nose or a scratchy feeling in the throat is the first sign, followed within hours by sneezing and a watery nasal discharge. The entire cold is usually over all by itself in about seven days, with perhaps a few lingering symptoms (cough) for another week. If it lasts longer, consider another problem, such as a sinus infection or allergies. For more information on ear nose and throat health, visit www.entnet.org

Allergies

Allergy symptoms appear when the immune system reacts to particles that have entered the body as though they were an unwelcome invader. Many common substances can be allergens—pollens, food, mold, dust, feathers, and animal dander. When an allergen enters the body, the immune system rapidly recognizes it, causing a series of reactions that cause the production and release of many inflammatory substances including histamine. Histamine produces common allergy symptoms such as itchy, watery eyes, nasal and sinus congestion, headaches, sneezing, scratchy throat, hives, or shortness of breath. Other less common symptoms are balance disturbances, skin irritations such as eczema, and even respiratory problems like asthma. For some allergy sufferers, symptoms may be seasonal, but for others it is a year-round discomfort.