

HEALTH TIPS

Consejos de Salud

Let's Learn about Respiratory Infections

It is very common to get symptoms like cough, sore throat, runny nose and watery eyes. Usually when you get these symptoms, it means you have a respiratory infection, like the common cold. But how do you know if you need to go to the doctor or just take care of it at home? Keep reading to find out...

Respiratory Infections

This is a word doctors use to describe infections that affect the nose, sinuses (spaces behind and around the nose area), the throat, airways and lungs.

Usually viruses are the ones that cause respiratory infections, but sometimes bacteria cause them too.

Bacteria and viruses are very small living things that are all around us and can grow inside other living beings. There are many different types of viruses and bacteria, but some of them can cause us to get sick.

Viruses and bacteria can easily spread from person to person by touching or breathing in air that has the bacteria or virus. They can also spread from an object to a person by touching.

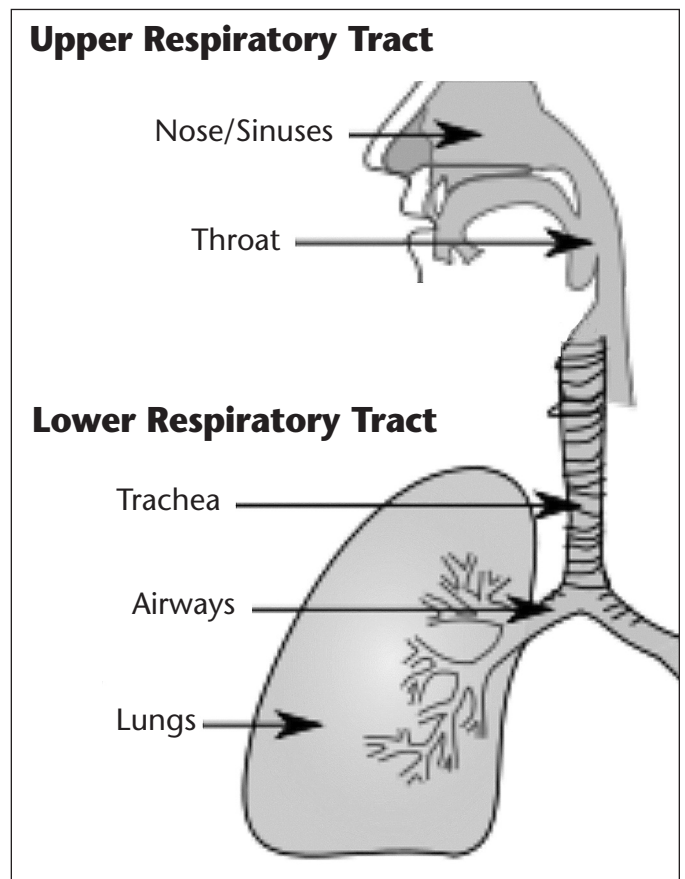
Upper Respiratory Infections

These are infections that affect the nose, sinuses and throat. The most common upper respiratory infections are:

- common cold
- infection of the tonsils (tonsillitis)
- infection of the sinuses (sinusitis)
- infection of the voice box (laryngitis)
- influenza (flu)

The main symptoms are:

- low fever
- cough
- headache
- sore throat
- stuffy or runny nose
- sneezing
- muscles aches



Lower Respiratory Infections

These are infections that affect the airways and the lungs. The most common lower respiratory infections are:

- influenza (flu can also affect the airways and lungs)
- infection of the airways (bronchitis)
- infection of the lungs (pneumonia)
- tuberculosis

The main symptoms are:

- cough (usually stronger than in the upper respiratory infections with phlegm and mucus)
- faster breathing
- wheezing
- shortness of breath

When to Go to the Doctor

Many respiratory infections make you feel bad, but after some time, your body is able to recover and the infection goes away. But sometimes respiratory infections get worse and turn into a serious illness.

So go to your doctor if you:

- have symptoms that last more than 10 days
- have a temperature higher than 100.4° F
- cough up blood, or yellow or brown mucus
- feel sleepy, dizzy or confused
- feel short of breath or feel pain in the chest
- cannot swallow well
- have a hoarse voice

Treating Your Symptoms at Home

If your symptoms are mild, resting, drinking plenty of liquids and eating healthy foods, like chicken soup, will help you feel better. Here are some other tips:

For sore throat or cough

- Soothe your throat with ice chips or sore throat spray
- Use a clean humidifier or breathe in steam from a bowl of hot water or shower

For ear pain

- Put a warm wet cloth over the ear that hurts

For runny nose

- Use a saline nasal spray

If you have pain or fever lower than 100.4° F, use pain medicines that you can get without a prescription, like acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen. You can also take medicines to treat your other symptoms, like a cough, stuffy nose, and sore throat. Always follow the instructions on the label of the medicine bottle.





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What You Should Know about Antibiotics

What is an antibiotic?

An antibiotic is a type of medicine used to fight infections caused by bacteria (*bacterial infection*). Antibiotics kill bacteria or stop bacteria from growing in number. Antibiotics save lives when they are used the right way. But antibiotics do not kill viruses and cannot cure an infection caused by a virus (*viral infection*), like the common cold.

How do doctors decide to prescribe an antibiotic?

Doctors usually check your symptoms first and ask you how long you have been sick. If your doctor thinks you may have a bacterial infection, then he/she will send you to get some tests.

If the test shows you DO NOT have a bacterial infection, your doctor may prescribe medicines to treat your symptoms or tell you things you can do at home to help you feel better.

If the test shows you DO HAVE a bacterial infection, your doctor will prescribe the best antibiotic to treat the type of bacteria that is making you sick.

Why don't doctors prescribe an antibiotic every time you have a respiratory infection?

Many people think they need an antibiotic to get better from a respiratory infection. But if you have a viral infection, the antibiotic does nothing to cure your infection.

Doctors are learning that using antibiotics too much and when they are not needed is making some bacteria stronger as they fight against the antibiotics. This is making it harder to kill these bacteria. If you get this kind of bacteria, they can stay in your body for a long time and make you very sick. This means that:

- your infection will last longer
- you may need more visits to the doctor
- you may need to go to the hospital and stay longer
- you may need more expensive and stronger medicines

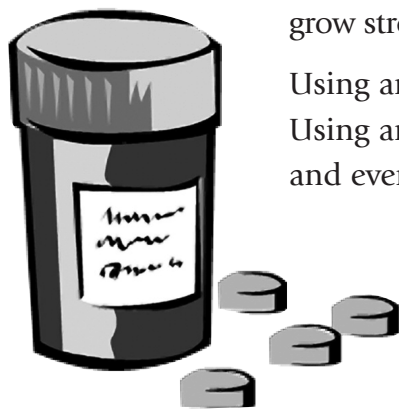


For more information
about the use of antibiotics
go to:

www.cdc.gov/getsmart

What can you do to stop this from happening?

- If your doctor says you have a viral infection and do not need an antibiotic, ask for other ways to treat your symptoms.
- If your doctor does give you an antibiotic, take all of the medicine even if you start to feel better. This is very important to make sure it kills all of the bad bacteria. The bacteria that stay alive can become stronger, make you sick again, and spread to other people.
- If you don't take all of your antibiotic medicine, do not use the leftover medicine the next time you get sick. Do not give it to someone else either. That antibiotic might not work for another infection or it may not be enough to kill the bacteria that are making you sick. It will only make the bacteria in your body grow stronger.



Using antibiotics the wrong way can create infections that are harder to cure. Using antibiotics the right way will protect your health, the health of your family and even the health of your community!





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Getting Ready for Influenza Season

Mrs. Garcia and I are promotoras at “La Buena Salud” Health Center. We are working on our outreach and education plan for the fall. This past year, our community was hit hard by the influenza. Many of our patients were sick and some had to go to the hospital. To get all promotores ready for the influenza season, we have invited Dr. Mendoza to answer our questions about influenza.

Dr. Mendoza, can you tell us, what is the flu?

Influenza, or the “flu”, is a serious illness that is caused by different types of viruses. In each flu season, different types of flu viruses spread and affect people in different ways. Some people will be able to fight back and recover without medical care. Others will get very sick and need medical attention. Every year, a few people die from the flu. Flu symptoms are a lot like common cold symptoms but more severe, and can also include diarrhea and vomiting.

Who is at a higher risk of getting very sick?

The groups with the highest risk are:

- Children under 5 years old
- Adults that are 65 and older
- Pregnant women
- People with asthma, heart disease, and diabetes
- People who have a weak immune system due to a disease like cancer or HIV



What if these people get sick? Should they go to their doctors?

If people that you outreach fall into any of these groups and they get sick with these symptoms, they need to go to the doctor right away to get medical attention. If they are not in any of these groups but they are worried about their symptoms and think it may be the flu, they should also go to their doctor.



What can people do to protect themselves from the flu?

This is what everyone should do:

- Starting at 6 months of age, get the flu vaccine each year
- Stay away from people who are sick
- Try not to go to places where there are a lot of people
- Wash your hands often with soap and water



If a person is already sick with the flu, doing these things will protect others:

- cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- wash hands often with soap and water
- try not to touch the eyes, nose or mouth
- clean objects after using or touching them
- take the medicines the doctor gives to you



Where can people get a flu vaccine?

People can get vaccinated in many places like health centers, doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, and pharmacies.

Why do people need to get the flu vaccine every year?

There are two reasons:

- The vaccine only helps the body fight viruses for a short period of time.
- Flu viruses change all the time, so every year scientists check how well the vaccine is working to fight the new viruses and they change the vaccine, if needed.



Dr. Mendoza gave us a great message to give to all of our community members. He also wants to make sure we tell everyone to get the flu vaccine early in the fall. This is the most important thing we all can do to fight against the flu virus!

To find a place near you
where you can get the
vaccine, go to:
<http://vaccine.healthmap.org> or
www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov



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Tuberculosis in Beverly Farms

Pedro works at Beverly Farms. He supervises a crew of farmworkers. His closest friend at work, Luis, had been sick for some time. He was having night sweats, coughing up phlegm and losing a lot of weight. One day he coughed up blood and was sent to the local health center. It turned out Luis had tuberculosis (TB). A few days later, a health care worker came to the farm and told Pedro he and his crew needed to get tested for TB.



What is TB?

TB is a disease caused by a type of bacteria. Normally, these bacteria attack the lungs but they can also attack the kidneys, spinal cord and brain.

TB is spread through the air from one person to another. When someone with TB bacteria coughs, laughs, sings or sneezes, the bacteria may spread through the air. If you breathe in this air, the bacteria can get into your lungs and make you very sick. The bacteria can do two things to your body:

1

It can stay in your body without you noticing it. This is called latent TB or TB infection.

When you have TB infection:

- you CANNOT pass the bacteria to others
- you do not feel sick
- you do not have symptoms

2

It can grow and make you sick, like Luis. This is called active TB or TB disease.

When you have TB disease:

- you CAN pass the bacteria to others
 - you do feel sick
 - you do have symptoms
-

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Pedro and all his crew went to the health center to get tested for TB. Pedro was the only one that got infected with the TB bacteria, but he does not have TB disease.

How do doctors test for a TB infection?

The doctor injects a drop of a liquid into the skin on your arm. If you get a hard, raised, red bump on the same place of the injection, that means you have TB infection. If you have TB infection, the doctor will also take an X-ray of your chest to make sure you don't have TB disease also. If the X-ray shows spots in your lungs, then you may have TB disease.



Now Pedro will have to take an antibiotic medicine for TB. If he does not take the medicine, he can get sick with TB disease and pass it on to others.

Does TB medicine work well?

Most people who complete the antibiotic treatment for TB infection will not get TB disease. Doctors prescribe antibiotics for about 3-9 months to kill the TB bacteria.

Take the medicine until your doctor tells you that you have finished the treatment. Take it even if you do not feel sick. If you stop, the TB bacteria may stay in your body, and after some time, it can become active, grow in number, and make you sick.