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Resident Characteristics & Assessments
Cold & Flu

Common Treatments

Dr. Mom has been practicing medicine for over 30 years, and has raised two children. She has learned that people sometimes need both the knowledge of a doctor and the comfort of a mom. Dr. Mom shares some tips for fighting cold and flu symptoms. Although colds and flus are caused by different viruses, they have many symptoms in common. Regardless of whether you've get a cold or have the flu, here are some ways to feel better faster. There a couple of basic things you can do to speed your recovery from cold and flu. First, drink lots of water. When you have a cold or a cough, you can often get very dehydrated without realizing it. Drinking water throughout the day will make you feel better. Also, drinking water makes your mucus flow more freely. Second, get lots of rest. Being well rested helps your body fight off the illness, and if you're running around all day, it'll take longer to recover. So give yourself permission to get the rest you need - even if it means sleeping longer than usual. Also, if you have a cold or the flu, make sure to avoid dairy products, like milk or cheese, which increase mucus production. Chicken soup has been heralded as a cold therapy since the famous 12th-century physician Moses Maimonides prescribed it to patients. Sipping hot chicken soup can really help clear up congestion. In fact, many of the traditional ingredients in chicken soup are natural versions of the cough medicines and expectorants commonly sold in the pharmacies. The bottom line is that your Mom was right: chicken soup is one of the best therapies for a cold or flu. If your throat is sore and scratchy, try gargling every two hours or so with warm salt water. Salt relieves your discomfort by killing bacteria and reducing swelling, but it doesn't treat the underlying illness. If you have a fever over 100 degrees or are experiencing achiness, try taking a low dosage of Tylenol, which is known generically as acetaminophen. Tylenol is an effective pain reliever and fever reducer. Tylenol is not the same as aspirin, but whenever I mention analgesics, I like to remind people never to give aspirin to children, as it can cause a serious illness called Reye's syndrome. I hope these tips help you and your family to feel better. Remember, if your symptoms don't go away after a couple of days, make sure to see your doctor.

OTC Medications

Dr. Mom has been practicing medicine for over 30 years, and has raised two children. She has learned that people sometimes need both the knowledge of a doctor and the comfort of a mom. Dr. Mom, when someone has a cold, what kinds of over-the-counter (OTC) medication can they take? OTC medications are treatments you can get without a prescription. They usually are marketed under familiar brand names, like Motrin or Tylenol, and commonly can be found at your local pharmacy. But with all of the options that you can see on the pharmacy shelves, it can be very difficult to figure out which kind of medication will work for your symptoms. Analgesics are one important type of OTC medicine. Commonly referred to as pain-killers, analgesics include aspirin, Motrin, and Tylenol. Remember, if you’re treating a child, never give aspirin to anyone under the age of 12. When you have a runny nose or are stuffed up, there are two kinds of medication that can help. Pseudoephedrine, commonly sold under the brand name Sudafed, helps dry and clear the nasal passages and will also make you feel alert and awake. Make sure to check with a doctor before taking pseudoephedrine, as it can be dangerous for people with high blood pressure or a history of heart disease. Combination medications containing antihistamines, such as Actifed, can help to dry a runny nose. Antihistamines often cause drowsiness. Both of these medications can help you get through your cold, just be sure to take the right one at the right time of day. Another way to treat stuffiness or a runny nose is with a decongestant like phenylephrine, which is sold under the brand name Neo-Synephrine. Decongestants help to reduce nasal swelling and can provide quick relief. The careful use of decongestants is very important. Using them for more than 5 days in a row can actually lead to worse congestion in the long run. If you have a wet cough where you are producing mucus, you should use an expectorant. Expectorants, found in medications like Robitussin, work by thinning mucus so that it can more easily be coughed up. Once the mucus has been expelled, coughing

lessens considerably. On the other hand, if you have a dry cough without much mucus, you should use a cough suppressant like dextromethorphan. These medications work by blocking the cough reflex center in the brain. No one likes having a cold. But treating each symptom with the right medicine is the way to feel better while you get healthy. So, the next time you or someone in your family is sick, you'll be able to make them feel better faster.

When to See a Doctor

When we are sick, we usually get better with rest and time. But sometimes, we need some help from the doctor to get well. Dr. Mom, a physician and mother of two, has some tips on when you should go to the doctor. Having the cold or the flu is no fun. The good news is that most people recover from the flu in a few days, and from colds in a week. But not everything that seems like a cold or the flu is really innocuous. Here are some symptoms to watch for. If you or a loved one have any of the following symptoms, then you need to seek medical attention as soon as possible. One symptom to be on the lookout for is an earache. If you have an earache during a cold you may have a bacterial infection, and you could need antibiotics. Another fairly distinct symptom to be on the alert for is green mucus. If your mucus is green, be sure to see your physician immediately, as this is often a symptom of pneumonia or bronchitis. Neither a cold nor the flu should not make you short of breath or cause pain in your chest. If you are experiencing either of these symptoms, it could indicate a more serious problem like pneumonia or heart disease, so please call your physician. Painful swallowing is also not a normal symptom of cold. It can often be the sign of an infection or injury that needs to be treated by a doctor. If you have a fever of 101 degrees or higher, or a fever that lasts more than 3 days, then you see your doctor to make sure you don't have a secondary infection. Excessive vomiting while you have a cold poses a serious danger of dehydration. Try to drink lots of fluids to stay hydrated. If you are unable to keep the fluids down, you may need to go to the hospital to receive fluids intravenously. If your cold lasts for 'too long', that is also an important indicator that you should see a doctor. How long is 'too long'? It depends on who the patient is. For newborns, any cold is too long. At the first sign of cold or flu symptoms, take your child to the pediatrician immediately. If you are pregnant, or nursing a baby, then if the cold persists for longer than three days it could be dangerous for you and the baby. For everyone else, cold and flu symptoms should run their course in 7 days or less. If your cold lasts longer than that, it is time to see a doctor. Remember, cold and flu symptoms are usually indicative of a common ailment, so don't worry unnecessarily. But, it is smart to be on the lookout for indications that you might need a doctor's care, and respond appropriately.

Acknowledgements

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Dr. Marsha Silberstein is a board-certified anesthesiologist, who began practicing medicine in the early 1970s, after receiving a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Silberstein has a broad range of experience, including patient care, running a successful medical consulting practice, and serving as a vice president with the insurance company CIGNA. Today, in addition to practicing medicine, Dr. Silberstein is pursuing a rabbinical degree and volunteers as a hospital chaplain.