



Management of Respiratory Tract Infections (RTIs) for Adults

Respiratory tract infections (RTIs) are most commonly caused by viruses. Influenza (“the flu”), COVID-19, and a “cold” are examples of RTIs. Often, they can be managed with supportive care at home, and don’t require a doctor’s visit. Antibiotics will not work for a viral infection, but there are many things that can be done to help symptoms.

The most common symptoms with RTIs are runny nose, cough, sore throat, ear pain, fever/chills, body aches, and fatigue. Viral infections generally can last 7-10 days, with some symptoms such as a lingering cough and congestion can take up to 3-4 weeks to fully settle.

Certain medical conditions can increase your risk of developing complications or more severe symptoms. If you have any of these conditions, please call your CVFP health team so they can review your personal risk and make a plan to care for you safely:

- Lung conditions: asthma, COPD, emphysema
- Heart conditions: recent heart attack, valvular heart disease, unstable coronary artery disease or congestive heart failure
- Diabetes
- Immune compromised due to medical conditions, or on immune suppressant medications

If you have any of these symptoms, please call your CVFP health team immediately or seek urgent medical attention through ER or Urgent Care if severe:

- Altered mental state (confusion, disoriented)
- Difficulty breathing or feeling shortness of breath
- Acute chest pain
- Signs of dehydration (dry mouth, no/little tears, less urine)
- Severe headache
- Swelling around your eyes
- Changes in vision
- Weakness/numbness in your body

Below is a chart that outlines things you can do at home to help your symptoms. If you are unsure what the right plan is for you, please call your CVFP Health Team.

Symptom	Self-care measures
Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluids: very important as illness and fever increase the need for fluids in the body. Take small sips of fluids often. Drink a combination of fluids (water, diluted juice, milk, soup). • To help with discomfort from a fever or aches/pains, you can take Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen/Naproxen (Advil, Aleve). Use as directed on the package - check with your provider/health team if you are unsure which medication is right for you. • Acetaminophen: 500mg every 4-6 hours (max dosing 4000mg/24hours). Do not use if allergic or known liver disease or decreased liver function. • Ibuprofen/Naproxen: 400mg every 8 hours (maximum dosing 3200mg/24 hours). Don't take if allergic, known decreased kidney function. • Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen/Naproxen can be given together, or staggered at intervals. Ibuprofen and Naproxen should not be used at the same time. • Lukewarm bath, cool face cloths • Clothing that you can add/remove layers as needed for comfort
Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medication as outlined under Fever • Frequent sips of cool or warm (not too hot) fluids depending on preference and comfort • Soft cold foods • Saltwater gargle rinses (¼ teaspoon salt dissolved in ½ cup warm water) as often as desired • Cool-mist humidifier • Avoid foods that irritate the throat (e.g., spicy, acidic) • Avoid smoking • Throat lozenges
Ear pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medication as outlined under Fever • Warm compress on the affected ear(s)
Sinus congestion/ Runny nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medication as outlined under Fever • Using saline rinses twice daily (e.g., Netipot, hydraSense) • Warm compresses on face • Cool mist humidifier • Keep well hydrated • Avoid smoking • Keep your head elevated when laying down

Cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep your head elevated when laying down• Frequent fluids to help soothe an irritated throat• Cool mist humidifier• Talk to your pharmacist or CVFP health team to see if over-the-counter cough medications are recommended for you
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Check out these additional resources:

Alberta Health Services: Respiratory Illnesses

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Topic/Immunization/Pages/respiratory-illness.aspx>

My Health Alberta Viral Respiratory Infection Care Instructions

[https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/AfterCareInformation/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=uh3645
&](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/AfterCareInformation/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=uh3645&)

Alberta Health Services COVID-19 Self-Care Guide

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17824.aspx>

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