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## **COUGH/BRONCHITIS**

### **Symptoms:**

- Cough, dry mostly
- Drainage in throat
- Wheezy sensation in chest

### **Self Care:**

- Salt water gargles
- Salt water nasal irrigation
- Diphenhydramine at bedtime
- Allergy treatment if you have allergies (fexofenadine or cetirizine used DAILY throughout your allergy season)

### **What doesn't help:**

- Antibiotics
- Dextromethorphan
- Mucinex

### **When to see a doctor:**

- Cough lasts longer than 10 days
- History of asthma
- Coughing up blood, more than a trace or streak
- Persistent fever > 102F/39C

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## **NAUSEA, VOMITING, DIARRHEA; "STOMACH FLU"**

### **Symptoms:**

- Initial fever, or feverish feeling
- Sudden onset nausea and vomiting
- Loose stools starting shortly after the vomiting, or within the next few days

### **Self Care:**

- Rest
- Drink small amounts of fluid at frequent intervals
- Salty snacks as able
- Consider over the counter medicine for nausea

### **What doesn't help:**

- Antibiotics

- Antidiarrheals such as Immodium – they may slow down the frequency of diarrhea, but do nothing to heal the problem and may make it worse
- Pedialyte for adults is rather pointless
- Probiotics
- Fiber

### **When to see a doctor:**

- Vomiting last more than a few hours
- Persistent fever of 102F/39C or higher
- Blood in the stool more than a trace or streak
- Severe abdominal pain – should likely go to the ER
- Diarrhea lasting more than 4 or 5 days

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## **THE COMMON COLD**

Take care, not antibiotics

### **Symptoms:**

- Initial fever, or feverish feeling
- Irritated throat
- Nasal congestion and drainage
- Cough
- Headache
- Ear congestion and intermittent pain

### **Self Care:**

- Pain and fever medicines are readily available, and include acetaminophen and ibuprofen.
- Decongestants may give some temporary relief, but may interfere with sleep or cause jitteriness and chills.
- Salt water gargles and nasal irrigation with a neti pot.

### **What doesn't help:**

- Zinc
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin D
- Multivitamins
- Echinacea
- Airborne
- Mucinex

### **When to see a doctor:**

- Persistent fever of 102F/39C or higher
- If the facial pressure and pain last longer than 10 days

## USEFUL OTC MEDICATIONS

OTC means "Over-the-counter," or "pharmacy" medicines. You don't need a doctor's prescription for these.

Prescription drugs require a physician's order; it is dispensed in a prescription bottle with a pharmacy label. It is illegal to carry prescription medications WITHOUT the original bottle, and it is illegal for anyone to take the medicine if it was not prescribed for them. This includes antibiotics, blood pressure pills, prescription antihistamines, and pain relievers such as prescription strength ibuprofen.

### EXAMPLES OF USEFUL OTC MEDICATIONS;

#### Diphenhydramine (Benedryl):

- Antihistamine/anticholinergic
- Good for itching
- Good for nasal/throat drainage and the associated cough
- Can cause drowsiness
- Can cause constipation
- Can cause dry mouth

#### Fexofenadine (Allegra) or cetirizine (Zyrtec):

- Good for allergies – a foundation of therapy
  - ◆ Best used before allergies start; that is, before you are exposed to the seasonal pollen
  - ◆ Must be used consistently – every day!
- Good for itchy rashes if they are allergy related
- Good for allergic itchy eyes, but might make your eyes a bit dry
- Don't cause drowsiness in the vast majority of people

#### Acetaminophen (Tylenol, paracetamol in the UK):

- Good for mild pain
- Good for fever
- Has the potential to damage the liver if you take too much or combine it with alcohol

#### Ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve):

- Both are "NSAIDs" (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs)
- Good for mild to moderate pain, especially musculoskeletal
- Good for fever
- Can be overused for headaches, and make the headaches worse
- Can cause stomach irritation

#### Heartburn medicines/antacids:

- These have a basic pH, and directly neutralize acid in your stomach
- Act quickly
- Transient relief
- Calcium hydroxide is associated with constipation
- Magnesium hydroxide is associated with diarrhea

#### Heartburn medicines/H2 blockers:

- Examples include Tagamet (cimetidine), Pepcid (famotidine), or Zantac (ranitidine)
- Work by blocking histamine mediated stimulation of the stomach cells that produce acid
- Take a couple of hours or even a day or two to work
- More consistent relief
- Moderate potency

#### Heartburn medicines/PPI (proton pump inhibitors):

- Examples include Prilosec (omeprazole) and Prevacid (lansoprazole)
- Works by blocking the release of acid from stomach cells
- Very potent inhibitor of stomach acid
- Most effective at relieving acid related symptoms
- May be so effective at decreasing the acid levels that you don't absorb calcium as well, and it might weaken bones
- You have an increased risk of pneumonia

#### Antivert/meclizine:

- Used for nausea, motion sickness, and mild vertigo
- May cause some drowsiness

#### Probiotics:

- Deliver helpful bacteria to the gut
- Useful to moderate gut function, that is, can help with both diarrhea and with constipation
- Useful to restore healthy gut flora after the stomach flu, or after taking antibiotics

#### Cortisone:

- Very mild over the counter, very strong prescription versions available
- Anti-inflammatory for the skin
- Useful for itchy rashes or chafing
- Useful for chapped lips