

**University of North Carolina Wilmington**  
**Abrons Student Health Center**

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT YOUR COLD AND FLU SYMPTOMS**

This information is provided because you are likely to have a cold or minor flu-like illness. TIPS: Avoid multi-symptom cold formulas (unless otherwise noted below). Take only what you need based on your symptoms. Any medication can have side effects. None of these treatments will shorten the duration of the illness; only help diminish the intensity of the symptoms somewhat. *Most of the products noted in this sheet are available in our pharmacy.* If you develop a high fever; or symptoms are severe or worsening after a week, consider evaluation by a healthcare professional.

- For **cough**, we recommend the combination of the antihistamine *chlorpheniramine* (Chlor-Trimeton), the decongestant *pseudoephedrine* (Sudafed), and the anti-inflammatory *naproxen sodium* (Aleve). Chlorpheniramine may make you drowsy. Pseudoephedrine can disturb sleep. As with any pseudoephedrine product, you will need to go a pharmacy counter to get it, even though it does not require a prescription.
- For **congestion**; all oral decongestants are either *pseudoephedrine* or *phenylephrine*. The strongest decongestant we know of is *Mucinex D* (a mucolytic-decongestant combination), but it is more expensive. Check with our pharmacist to discuss options that are best for you. If you are a singer, decongestants or antihistamines may adversely affect your voice.
- Also helpful for **congestion** is a *vaporizer* in your bedroom at night, so that you are breathing in the water vapor that helps to thin mucus and decrease that nasty sore throat in the morning.
- For **more severe nasal/sinus congestion**, use *oxymetazoline* (generic Afrin) nasal spray for up through three days (longer use may cause worse congestion so limit to three days!).
- If you think **allergy** may be causing some of your symptoms, take *loratidine* (Claritin), *fexofenadine* (Allegra), or *cetirizine* (Zyrtec). These are antihistamines that generally do not cause drowsiness and are taken only once daily (may take a few days to kick in).
- If you are having **body aches, head ache, sore throat, or other pains**, take *acetaminophen* (Tylenol), or *ibuprofen* (Motrin, Advil, etc.), or *naproxen sodium* (Aleve).
- If you are having **trouble sleeping** due to symptoms (cough, achiness, etc.), take 25 to 50mg of *diphenhydramine* (Benadryl-an antihistamine that causes drowsiness) about 30 minutes before bedtime (you could still be a little groggy in the morning).
- If you have a **sore throat**, *gargle with warm salt water* (1/4 teaspoon salt in 8 oz. warm water), and/or try *throat lozenges or throat sprays*.
- If you feel **weak**, increase rest/sleep and increase fluid intake. If profoundly weak, see a health care professional.
- If you feel **nauseated**, take *Emetrol*. If vomiting more than a few times, see a health care professional.
- To **help your immune system**: Quit smoking, get plenty of rest, drink plenty of water, focus on good nutrition, and avoid stress if possible.
- Possible **immune system boosters**: Echinacea, Vitamin C, and Zinc probably do not hurt, but not sure if they help much.
- Want to learn more about **antibiotics**? Go to [www.cdc.gov/getsmart/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/index.html)