



**VANDERBILT**  
Student Health Center

**Self-Care for Viral Upper Respiratory Infection**

- Upper respiratory tract infections are usually viral.
- Symptoms include fever, runny nose, red eyes, nasal congestion, sore throat, cough, headache, laryngitis (lost voice) and body aches
- Viruses are self-limiting and symptoms can last up to 14 days
- Antibiotics are NOT effective in treating viral illnesses
- If you have cold symptoms or fever, you should perform an at-home COVID test or see a medical provider.
- If you test positive for COVID, follow the latest CDC isolation guidelines
- Do not go to class or social function until your temperature is less than 100.4 for 24 hours without fever reducers

**Treatment**

- Rest, increase fluids
- Use saline nasal spray and take hot showers to relieve nasal congestion
- Alternate ibuprofen (Motrin/Advil) and acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Acetaminophen: 650 mg every 6 hours or 1000 mg every 8 hours for pain and fever (Do not take more than 3000 mg of Acetaminophen in 24-hour period)
- Ibuprofen: 400-600 mg every 6 hours for pain and fever (Do not take with naproxen (Aleve))
- Sore throat: throat spray/lozenges (Chloraseptic, Cepacol). Warm saltwater gargles (gargle with 1 teaspoon of salt mixed with 8 ounces of warm water) along with Ibuprofen and Acetaminophen
- Nasal congestion: Phenylephrine (Sudafed PE) or pseudoephedrine (Sudafed or Mucinex D). Oxymetazoline (Afrin) nasal spray can be used with oral medication but do not use for more than 3 days without a 3-day break.
- Cough: dextromethorphan (Delsym) in the daytime and Nyquil Cough at bedtime
- Multi symptom cold preparations like Dayquil and Nyquil contain medications that treat more than one symptom. These are a suitable alternative to the above. Make certain to read the packaging and choose something that matches with your symptoms.