

VIRAL INFECTIONS

What are Viral Infections or Illnesses?

Viral infections are the usual causes of colds, coughs, fevers, rashes, most sore throats, most ear infections, Influenza (flu), gastroenteritis, diarrhea, and vomiting. Most viral infections are mild and do not last long, but they can be painful and make you feel very ill. The usual viral illnesses have the following things in common:

- They are self-limiting. They will get better without treatment.
- They are resistant to antibiotics. Antibiotics are of no help in treating a virus.
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How are Viral Infections spread?

Depending on the specific virus, infections can be airborne, animal borne, food borne, blood borne, or water borne. Prevention measures are the best way to avoid viral illnesses.

What are the symptoms of a Viral Infection?

Symptoms can vary depending on the particular virus. You may have fever, chills, sneezing, coughing, runny or stuffy nose, red or watery eyes, headache, decreased appetite, muscle aches, tiredness, sore throat, vomiting and/or diarrhea, and rashes.

How can Viral Infections be prevented?

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. You can pick up germs easily, even when shaking someone's hand or touching doorknobs or handrails
- Avoid people with colds when possible
- If you sneeze or cough, do it into a tissue and then throw the tissue away. If no tissues are available, sneeze or cough into the crook of your arm
- Blow your nose with a tissue, then throw the tissue away
- Clean surfaces touch with a germ-killing disinfectant
- Don't touch your nose, eyes, or mouth. Germs can enter your body easily by these routes.

How can I treat the symptoms?

- Drink plenty of clear fluids
- When ill, you may not feel like eating solid foods, but you need to drink to avoid dehydration
- If you have a stuffy nose, sore throat or cough, use a cool-mist humidifier
- Get plenty of rest
- Treat a fever with Tylenol (Acetaminophen) or Advil (Ibuprofen) – DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN
- Keep your child at home until they have been fever free for 24 hours

When should I see a physician?

- If your child's breathing is heavy or labored
- If you develop new symptoms or pains, including a stiff neck
- If your child looks or acts sicker
- If your child is very sleepy or very irritable
- If your child's fever lasts more than 2-3 days
- If your child appears dehydrated (no tears when they cry, no urine for 6 or more hours)
- If they look like they have lost weight
- If they act tired and will not lay for even a short time
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Where can I get more information?

Your family doctor, school nurse, or the local health department are excellent sources for information on all communicable diseases.