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## **Colds & Flu**

It's winter time and we are seeing more colds and flu, but becoming infected has nothing to do with being outside in the cold weather. Both colds and flu are very infectious and spread by close contact with a cold sufferer or inhaling cold virus spray in the air.

The common cold is a viral infection of the nose and throat which causes a runny nose sometimes with a cough, weepy eyes and sore throats. The flu is a more serious viral infection that can affect the whole body. It is much more debilitating than a cold and comes on very quickly. It is often accompanied by a fever and can last up to three weeks.

Occasionally colds or flu can be complicated by a bacterial infection which can lead to bronchitis, pneumonia, throat infections, middle ear infections and sinusitis. In these cases you should see your doctor as antibiotics may be helpful.

A child with symptoms such as a very sore throat, vomiting, high fever, a blotchy rash, stiff neck, joint or muscle pains, aversion to light, a strange high-pitched cry, extreme lethargy or irritability should be taken to the doctor immediately to rule out the possibility of serious illnesses such as meningococcal disease.

### **Treatment Options**

Anti viral medicine Tamiflu may help you get back on your feet again quickly from a bout of influenza (flu). Tamiflu attacks the flu virus stopping it from spreading further inside the body, therefore reducing its severity and duration.

It is a prescription medicine, however between May and September it can be sold by your pharmacist for adults and children over 12 years of age. For all colds and flu rest in bed is important as is keeping your fluids up. Fruit juice high in vitamin C may be a great way to boost your energy (especially if you have lost your appetite), keep you hydrated and rid your system of toxins. Hot water with lemon and honey is particularly soothing. Make sure you avoid alcohol, caffeine and milk.

Eating easily digested foods such as vegetable broth or chicken soup will ensure you get nutrients into your system. There is some evidence to support claims that chicken soup has unique anti-inflammatory properties and can also inhibit mucus production.

Medicines can be helpful to relieve the symptoms of a blocked nose, sore throat and cough. Paracetamol, Ibuprofen or Aspirin may be used to bring down fevers. It is important to check with your Pharmacist before giving Aspirin to children under 12 years of age.

Inhalants such as friars balsam or menthol and eucalyptus can be added to hot water to help clear the nose. The inhalant should be added to hot, not boiling water in a metal bowl. Place a towel over your head, close your eyes and inhale the vapour. Try aloe vera tissues or barrier creams on the nose to soothe sore, dry skin.