

What students need to know about

Viral Infections

Symptoms

Symptoms of the common cold vary from patient to patient; **runny nose, nasal congestion, sore throat, cough, fever and feeling tired** are the most common. These symptoms can last about 7-14 days.

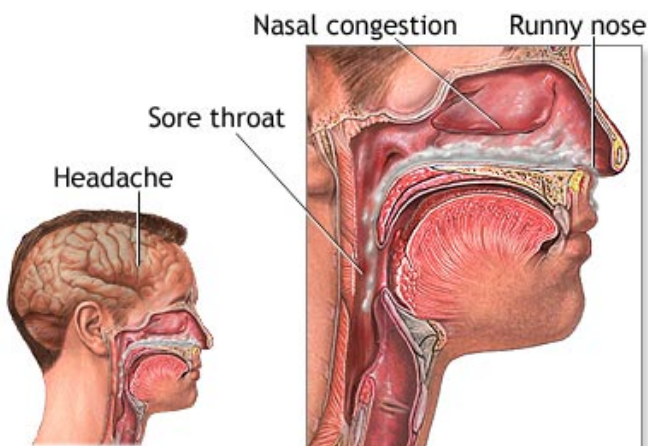
Cause

It is not possible to determine the exact cause but most are viral in nature.

Transmission

- Hand contact: direct contact with an infected person or indirect contact with a contaminated environmental surface. **Always wash your hands.**
- Small particle aerosols (droplet transmission): linger in the air for an extended time after a sneeze or cough. **Always cover your cough and sneeze with tissue.**

Symptoms of a cold:



TREATMENT — Symptomatic therapy remains the mainstay of common cold treatment and contrary to popular belief antibiotics are not effective in the treatment of the common cold.

- **Runny nose and sneezing** are improved by use of the use of antihistamines like Benadryl (diphenhydramine). Their use should be limited and carefully considered since it can cause sedation and drying of the eyes, nose. Anyone with high blood pressure should not take this medication as it may increase it.
- **Cough** may be caused by nasal obstruction or postnasal drip. Medication is rarely needed during the initial stages of illness, but if your cough persists and is keeping you up you may try Robitussin DM which has an expectorant (guaifenesin) which helps cough up phlegm and a cough suppressant (dextromethorphan).
- **Congestion** may be alleviated by topical and oral decongestant such as pseudoephedrine. Anyone with high blood pressure should not take this medication as it may increase it. Nasal saline rinses are also helpful.
- **Sore throat/Fever** is best treated with mild analgesics such as Ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Lozenges containing a local anesthetic are also helpful for sore throat.

Above all rest and lots of fluids will help your immune system recover and allow you to get on with your life.