

Fall Is Here!

As falling leaves and temperatures remind us that winter is approaching, so too is the start of cold and flu season! It is estimated that those over three years of age will experience two to four colds this season. For those under the age of three, the statistics are higher, perhaps six to eight colds! Upper respiratory infections (URIs) result from exposure to air droplets spread from person to person usually by coughing and sneezing. URIs are caused by viruses and NOT helped by antibiotics. Treatment is targeted toward symptom relief.

The common causative organisms of URIs are: rhinoviruses, coronavirus, parainfluenza, adenovirus and RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus). Symptoms include nasal congestion, runny nose, low grade fever (less than 101 F.), post-nasal drip and cough. URIs typically last seven to ten days. The best treatment is prevention! One should get plenty of rest, eat a healthy diet, drink plenty of fluids (preferably water!) and use good hand washing. Additional helpful behaviors are to avoid densely populated spaces and to avoid obviously ill people. Do NOT share drinks, eating utensils or other personal care items. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth as these areas are rich in mucous membranes that absorb viruses readily.

Should you be unfortunate enough to contract a URI, drink plenty of fluids, rest, cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow if you can't get to a tissue quickly enough. Saline nose washes followed by Neosporin ointment swabbed into the nostrils will provide relief from congestion and may protect you from developing a sinus infection. Over the counter decongestants also provide relief for those over three years of age. Running a vaporizer or humidifier during sleep and resting on two pillows will decrease night time coughing. Use of pain and fever reducers will decrease discomfort of sinus pressure and a scratchy throat. Remember, aspirin is not recommended for children under 19 years of age due to the risk of Reye's Syndrome. For infants and toddlers, saline and suction, humidification and fever reducers are the only treatments recommended. If symptoms last longer than ten days, are accompanied by high fever (greater than 102 F.), shortness of breath or vomiting, seek an urgent medical evaluation.

So enjoy the upcoming holiday season! Remember to get plenty of rest, eat your fruits and veggies and get a Flu vaccine!

