



Adult Symptom Management

For some infection-related symptoms, you may not need to come into the office. Please see the list of symptoms, their typical duration, what you can do at home, and when it may be time to call the office. This was designed for typical, healthy adults. For children's health, please call your pediatrician.



Adult Symptoms

Home Care

Office for further treatment

Common Symptoms	Typical Duration and Normal Course	Home Care	Call the Office...
Runny Nose/ Sinus Pain/ Sinus Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 to 15 days • Generally feel better after 3-4 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nasal decongestants (e.g., oxymetazoline [Afrin] 2 sprays each nostril, up to 5 days) • Oral decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine [Sudafed]) • Ibuprofen or acetaminophen • Nasal saline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever of greater than 102° F • Sinus symptoms that worsen after initial improvement • Lasts for longer than 10 days
Sore Throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 to 5 days • Gradual improvement after 3 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen or acetaminophen • Throat sprays or lozenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaking chills • Neck swelling • Trouble swallowing, drooling • Lasts longer than 5 days and not resolving
Cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 days • Changes from wet and productive cough to dry and annoying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest and fluids • Nighttime cough and cold medications • Ibuprofen or acetaminophen for aches, sore throat, headache • Humidified air 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lasts longer than 21 days • Initially improves then worsens • Fever greater than 102° F • Chest pain (other than from a pulled muscle) • Coughing up blood
Influenza/ "The Flu"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 to 14 days during flu season • Abrupt onset of high fever, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue • Improvement after the first 3-4 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest and fluids • Nighttime cough and cold medications • Ibuprofen or acetaminophen for aches, sore throat, headache • If congested, nasal or oral decongestants (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever greater than 102° F for more than 5 days • Lasts longer than 10 days
Diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runny or watery stools at least 3 times a day • May feel sick for the first 2 days • Loose stools can last 14 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink enough fluids so urine is light yellow-to-clear • Bland foods like bananas, rice, applesauce, toast (BRAT), noodles, potatoes, soup, salty foods • Loperamide [Immodium] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood in stool, black stools • Fever greater than 102° F for more than a day • Severe belly pain • Extreme fatigue, thirst, dizziness • Very dark urine or no urine for more than 5 hours
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 days • Stool that is hard, small, difficult to pass • Bowel movements less than 3 times per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of water • Eat high-fiber foods like fruits, vegetables, prune juice • Bulk laxatives like psyllium [Metamucil] • Fluid laxatives like polyethylene glycol [MiraLax], lactulose • Stimulant laxatives like senna [Ex-lax] or bisacodyl [Dulcolax] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New constipation that lasts for more than 1 week • Comes and goes, but lasts for more than 3 weeks • Pain, bleeding, weakness, weight loss, fever
Nausea/Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink lots of fluids • Soup and other soft, bland foods • Salted crackers, ginger ale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood or "coffee-grounds" • Black or bloody stools • Fever greater than 101° F • Stiff neck or severe headache • Extreme fatigue • Any of the diarrhea signs above

Antibiotics are NOT the first line of defense.

- Antibiotics do not help viral symptoms (many of the symptoms listed above)
- Antibiotics can have significant side effects such as
 - Vomiting, nausea
 - Diarrhea, bloating, indigestion
 - Skin rash
- Antibiotics contribute to antibiotic resistance – bacteria that is able to resist the effects of antibiotics, making infections untreatable