

FAQs

Should I go to the doctor or get an antibiotic for winter symptoms such as a cold, flu, cough, sore throat, sinusitis and middle ear infection?

These symptoms are caused by viruses. Antibiotics only work against bacteria so they will not work for these symptoms.

When should I see a doctor or seek medical advice if I have winter symptoms?

Most cold, flu, cough, sore throat, sinusitis and middle ear infection symptoms get better by themselves, but in a few cases when the symptoms are severe you should see the doctor.

Are over-the-counter medicines really effective for winter symptoms such as a cold, flu, cough, sore throat, sinusitis and middle ear infection?

There is no “cure” for these symptoms, but over the counter medicines work to relieve symptoms and make you feel more comfortable while your body fights the virus.

Can my pharmacist recommend what medicines are best for my symptoms?

Pharmacists are experts on medicines and can help you choose the medicine that will work best for your symptoms. The pharmacist can also help you assess your symptoms and advise you whether you need to see a doctor.

Should I stay at home if I have a cold, flu, cough, sore throat, sinusitis or middle ear infection?

Listen to your body and if you are tired get some rest until you feel better. Treat your symptoms to feel more comfortable. You will usually know when you are well enough to return to normal activities.

What's the difference between a virus and bacteria?

Some bacteria, such as gut bacteria, are essential for good health. When they do cause infections they are usually localised and antibiotics can kill them. Viruses are parasites whose only purpose is to multiply. No medicine kills a virus. You have to wait for your body's natural processes to isolate and destroy a virus.

What should I do if my child has a fever?

It is normal for your child to have a fever if they are fighting an infection and fever does not harm your child. However, you can help your child by giving them Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen. Sometimes sponging your child with cold water could cause them to shiver and further increase their temperature, but luke warm water may help a little. Some younger children may have a seizure as a result of a fever. If this happens, try not to panic and put your child in the recovery position. If your child has not had a fit before and it does not pass quickly it is best to call an ambulance. As fevers are normally caused by viruses, antibiotics are not normally effective in treating them.

What shall I do if my child has a cough, cold, sore throat or earache?

A child's immune system is very powerful and most common infections, such as a cough, cold, sore throat and/or earache, will clear up by itself. However, there are some things you can do to assist your child in their recovery, such as ensuring your child has plenty of rest,

giving them healthy food and ensuring they are well hydrated by giving them plenty to drink. This will also help break up any phlegm and will lubricate their throat if it is sore. Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen can also help to relieve pain and/or fever, although make sure you do not give more than the maximum dose. As most common infections are caused by viruses, antibiotics are not normally effective and by giving your child antibiotics, it can make the bacteria resistant to them meaning they will no longer work against the bacteria. Only children with signs of more serious illness generally need to be seen by a doctor or nurse. These signs include: excessive drowsiness, difficulty breathing or rapid breathing, cold or discoloured hands and/or feet with warm body, abnormal pains in arms and/or legs, abnormal colour (pale or blue), signs of meningitis.