



Respiratory Tract Infection (RTI) Appointment Guide

Causes: The majority of acute respiratory tract infections are viral (e.g. rhinovirus or “common cold”), influenza, COVID)) and can be managed with supportive care. Most patients with RTI do not benefit from antibiotics.

Risk factors for more severe illness and/or complications:

- Respiratory conditions: asthma, COPD, emphysema
- Cardiac conditions: recent MI, valvular heart disease, unstable CAD/CHF
- Diabetes
- Immunocompromised due to medical condition, or on immunosuppressant medications
- Medically complex or frail adult
- Children under age 2

Possible symptoms and red flags: (adapted from “The Cold Standard”)

	Red flags (should be assessed in person, to ER/UC if severe)	May be managed at home with self-care measures
Suspected /Confirmed COVID	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● SOB or hypoxia● Concerns of dehydration● Suspicion of secondary bacterial infection● Any red flags*● Use RAG tool to assist with triage as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Fever/aches/chills● Respiratory symptoms● GI symptoms
Fever (red flags listed, see other symptom sections for other care considerations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Fever of $\geq 39^{\circ}\text{C}$ for more than 3 days● Fever that isn't made more comfortable with analgesics (acetaminophen/ibuprofen) *the temperature may not decrease with meds, but should be make more comfortable*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● See other symptom sections for at home care measures parameters



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any fever lasting more than 5 days 	
Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trouble breathing Unable to talk in words Unable to swallow liquids/drooling Symptoms for >7 days without improvement Visible neck swelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms less than 7 days or improving after 7 days Fever lasting more than 5 days (or fever that isn't made more comfortable with medication)
Ear pain (adults and children over 6 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent or worsening symptoms for more than 48 hours despite adequate pain medication Fever $\geq 39^{\circ}\text{C}$ Feels generally unwell Discharge from ear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild symptoms for less than 48 hours Fever $<39^{\circ}\text{C}$ Pain controlled with oral pain medication Otherwise feels well
Sinus congestion/runny nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of sinusitis red flags** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms >7-10 days with no improvement and no red flags
ILI/cold symptoms (listed above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lips and tongue more red than normal (peds) Red eyes between fever episodes (peds) Concerns of dehydration SOB/hypoxia Return of cough after being cough free Presence of red flags* Fever that isn't made more comfortable with antipyretics Symptoms for >7-10 days without improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever that is made more comfortable with antipyretics Cough without SOB/wheezing/hypoxia Congestion Body aches GI symptoms



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More difficulty managing chronic conditions because of RTI	
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***Red flags for patients with viral infection:**

- **For children (direct these to ER):** consistent fever of over 40.5°C despite medication, altered mental state, fast breathing, trouble breathing, bluish lips or face, ribs pulling in with each breath, chest pain, child refuses to walk, signs of dehydration, history of seizure, complaining of neck pain/stiffness, any fever in a child < 12 weeks of age,
- **For adults (direct these to ER/UC if severe):** altered mental state, difficulty breathing/SOB, acute chest pain or abdominal pain, dizziness, confusion, signs of dehydration

****Red flags for patients with sinusitis:** altered mental state, severe headache, systemic toxicity, swelling of orbit, change in visual acuity, neurological deficits

Treatment:

- The symptoms you are describing suggest a viral infection
- Viral infections generally can last 7-10 days, with some symptoms such as a lingering cough and congestion can take up to 3-4 weeks to fully settle
- Antibiotics can't treat a viral infection, but there are many things you can do at home to manage symptoms:
 - o Rest as much as possible
 - o Drink plenty of fluids (combination of water and other fluids such as broth, diluted juices)
 - o Wash your hands frequently and try to stay home to avoid spreading infection

Pediatrics:

Symptom	Self-care measures
Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fluids: very important as illness and fever increase the need for fluids in the body. Offer small sips of fluids often. Offer a



	<p>combination of fluids (water, breastmilk/milk, soup, yogurt, popsicles, Pedialyte)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To help with discomfort from a fever or aches/pains, you can give Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) or Ibuprofen if 6+ months old (Advil, Motrin). Use as directed on the package according to child’s weight. If you are unsure which medication/dose is right for your child, please call your health team to review. ● Acetaminophen: can be given every 4-6 hours, but no more than 5 doses in 24 hours. Don’t give if child has known liver disease or decreased liver function. Dose according to package instructions ● Ibuprofen (if 6+ months old): can give every 6 hours but not more than 4 doses in 24 hours. Don’t give if child is less than 6 months old or known decreased kidney function. Dose according to package instructions ● Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen can be given together, or staggered at intervals ● Lukewarm bath, cool face cloths ● Clothing that you can add/remove layers as needed for comfort
<p>Sore throat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pain medication as outlined in Fever section ● Offer frequent sips of cool or warm (not too hot) fluids depending on child’s preference ● Soft cold foods (popsicles, yogurt, ice cream) ● Avoid foods that irritate the throat (e.g., spicy, acidic) ● For older children, saltwater gargle rinses (¼ teaspoon salt dissolved in ½ cup warm water) hourly as needed
<p>Ear pain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pain medication as outlined in Fever section ● Warm compress on the affected ear(s)
<p>Sinus congestion/ Runny nose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cleaning out child’s nose before sleep, before each feed if bottle/breastfeeding, and as needed for comfort ● Use an over-the-counter saline nose spray (e.g., hydraSense) or saline drops in each nostril. An aspiration bulb can be used to



	<p>gently remove the drops and mucus, or children will often sneeze or blow the mucus out once saline is instilled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try a cool mist humidifier in child’s room
Cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep child sitting or with their head at an incline ● Frequent fluids to help soothe an irritated throat ● Try a cool mist humidifier in the child’s room ● Over the counter cough medications can have harmful side effects in children. They are NOT recommended for children under 6 years old

Adults:

Symptom	Self-care measures
Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fluids: very important as illness and fever increase the need for fluids in the body. Take small sips of fluids often. Drink a combination of fluids (water, diluted juice, milk, soup) ● To help with discomfort from a fever or aches/pains, you can give Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen/Naproxen (Advil, Aleve). Use as directed on the package- check with your provider/health team if you are unsure which medication is right for you ● Acetaminophen: 500mg every 4-6 hours (max dosing 4000mg/24hours). Do not use if allergic, or known liver disease or decreased liver function ● Ibuprofen/Naproxen: 400mg every 8 hours (maximum dosing 3200mg/24 hrs). Don’t take if allergic, known decreased kidney function. ● Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen/Naproxen can be given together or staggered at intervals. Ibuprofen and Naproxen should not be used at the same time. ● Lukewarm bath, cool face cloths ● Clothing that you can add/remove layers as needed for comfort
Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pain medication as outlined above in Fever Section ● Frequent sips of cool or warm (not too hot) fluids depending on preference and comfort



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Soft cold foods● Saltwater gargle rinses (¼ teaspoon salt dissolved in ½ cup warm water) hourly as needed● Cool-mist humidifier● Avoid foods that irritate the throat (e.g., spicy, acidic)● Avoid smoking● Throat lozenges
Ear pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pain medication as outlined in Fever section● Warm compress on the affected ear(s)
Sinus congestion/ Runny nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pain medical as outlined in Fever section● Saline sinus rinses twice daily (e.g., Netipot, Hydrasense)● Warm compresses on face● Cool mist humidifier● Keep well hydrated● Avoid smoking● Keep your head elevated when laying down
Cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Keep your head elevated when laying down● Frequent fluids to help soothe an irritated throat● Try a cool mist humidifier● Talk to your pharmacist or health team if over-the-counter cough medications are recommended for you.

References:

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