

The Agave Apple

The Common Cold & Medications

The cold and flu season is upon us, and sooner or later we will need to stock up on over-the-counter medications. However, going to the store and looking at the large variety of products can often be very overwhelming and confusing, especially when we already aren't feeling well. Therefore, I have dedicated this month's Agave Apple to discussing the different over-the-counter medications and their most appropriate uses.

7-10 days

The number it takes the average person to recover from a viral illness.

200

The number of viruses that cause the common cold.

25%

The percentage of people who have continued symptoms at 2 weeks.

How do I know if this is a common viral cold or a bacterial infection?

Often bacterial infections are "secondary infection" which came after the initial viral infection. You may have a bacterial infection if symptoms last longer than 10 days, fevers are consistently higher than 101 F, or if the fever gets worse rather than improving. It is important to understand that antibiotics will not help ANY viral infection.

When should I contact my medical provider?

If you believe you may have developed a bacterial infection, you have tried over the counter medications without relief, or your viral cold is causing worsening of one of your chronic conditions, like COPD or asthma.

For more helpful information on cold medication visit our Facebook page or website. www.agavefamilyphysicians.com

Cold Medications

Fever, Chills & Body Aches

Acetaminophen (AKA Tylenol)
Ibuprofen (AKA Motrin, Advil)

**Available as part of many different cold medications

Runny Nose, Sneezing, Itching OR difficulty with sleep

Diphenhydramine (AKA Benadryl)

**Available as part of many night time cold medications

Sinus Congestion &/or Cough

Phenylephrine or pseudoephedrine
+/- Guafenesin
(decongestant +/- expectorant)
Oxymetazoline HCL

Examples: Mucinex or Mucinex D
Afrin Nasal Sprays

Cough &/or Chest Congestion

Dextromethorphan +/- Guafenesin
(Cough suppressant +/- expectorant)

Examples: Delsym, Robitussin

**All "DM" formulations contain both suppressant & expectorant

I HAVE IT ALL!!

Phenylephrine, Dextromethorphan,
Guafenesin, Acetaminophen
+/- Diphenhydramine

Examples: Mucinex Severe Cold
Dayquil Severe Cold & Flu

More Information on the Common Cold and Over-the-counter Medications

Different cold medication ingredients explained

There are many different ingredients used in cold and flu medications, and each ingredient has a specific purpose. Knowing what these ingredients do can help guide you towards the medication that is going to work the best for your symptoms.

Expectorant: loosens mucus, making it easier to cough up or blow out
(ex: guaifenesin)

Anti-tussive: decreases the urge to cough
(ex: dextromethorphan)

Nasal decongestant: decreases swelling of nasal passage ways & sinuses
(ex: phenylephrine, pseudoephedrine, oxymetazoline HCL)

Anti-histamine: dries up nasal secretions, regardless of the cause
(ex: diphenhydramine)

What medications can I give my child?

Unfortunately for children under the age of two the options for treatments are very limited. Infants under 3 months should be taken to the ER immediately.

Infants over 6lbs (or 4 months) can be given acetaminophen (AKA Tylenol) and infants over 12lbs (or 6 months) can be given ibuprofen (AKA Advil, Motrin) safely for any fevers or pains. Other conservative treatments that can be used include humidifiers, nasal saline and increased fluids.

While it is best to wait until the child is at least 4 years old to use over the counter cold medications, guaifenesin can be used in children as young as 2 years if necessary.

After the age of 4 years it is safe to start using certain over-the-counter cough and cold medications (ex: Robitussin Children's Cough and Cold).

After the age of 6 or 7 years old it is safe to give the childrens version of most over-the-counter medications. Please check the label to verify weight or age parameters and dosing prior to giving any medications.

Interested in learning more? Below I have listed some reputable websites containing more information on the common cold and cold medications.

www.cdc.gov/features/rhinoviruses

www.cdc.gov/getsmart/community/about

www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/buy-fast-relief-cold-flu

www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/common-cold/basics/definition/con-20019062