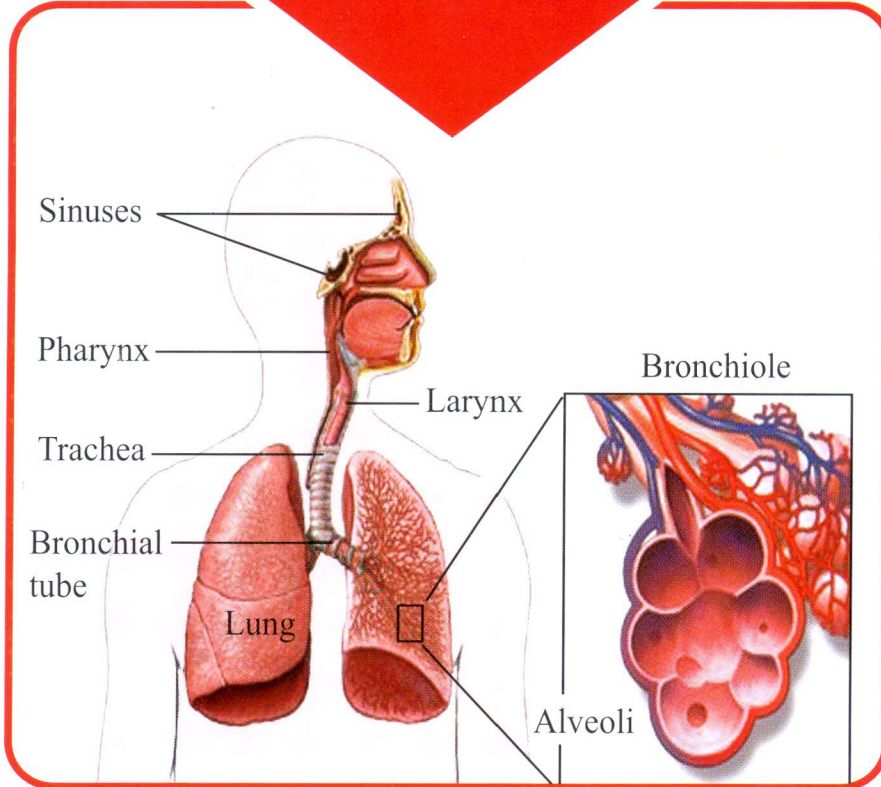


UPPER RESPIRATORYTRACT INFECTIONS (URTI)

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS/FAMILIES



This brochure provides information about Upper Respiratorytract Infections (URTI). It is designed to respond to the questions most frequently asked by patients.



آغا خان یونیورسٹی ہسپتال، کراچی

The Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi.

P.O. Box 3500, Stadium Road, Karachi-74800, Pakistan,

Website: www.aku.edu





INTRODUCTION

Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URTI) has a very high global prevalence with the peaks predominantly during the winter months and during changes of weather.

UPPER RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTIONS (URTI)

What is upper respiratory tract infection?

Upper respiratory infections, also known as Common Cold, can affect your nose, throat and sinuses. For healthy people, common cold is usually not serious and does not need special treatment. However, in the young, the elderly, and people with other medical problems, the common cold can progress to a much more severe infection. It is quite common for young children to get up to six to eight episodes of Viral URTI per year; average for adults is up to 2-4 episodes per year.

What are the causes of URTI (common cold)?

There are different types of viruses that cause the common cold. These viruses are very contagious, that is, it can easily spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or touching hands.

You are more likely to get a URTI if you are:

- emotionally or physically stressed
- tired
- immune deficient
- not eating enough healthy food
- a smoker
- living or working in crowded conditions
- suffering from allergies or asthma or other pre-existing respiratory conditions
- a child, elderly or a pregnant woman

What are the signs and symptoms of URTI (common cold)?

You can have one or more of the following symptoms:

- chills and fever – it may last for 1 to 3 days
- runny or stuffy nose

- ear ache
- scratchy tickly throat and hoarseness
- body aches and headaches
- chest and nasal congestion
- red, watery and sore eyes
- tired or restless
- decreased hunger or thirst

How did I catch URTI (a cold)?

It is easy to catch cold if you come in contact with one of the viruses that cause cold, from someone else who is infected. The cold virus can be transmitted in the following ways:

- **Through the air**

If a person with a cold sneezes or coughs without covering his/ her face, small amounts of the virus can go into the air as droplets from the nasal secretions and oral mucosa. Then, if you breathe in that air, the virus will adhere to your nasal membrane and infect you.

- **Direct contact**

If you directly touch a person who has an active infection, for instance, by shaking hands with someone who has not properly washed his / her hands after sneezing, coughing, blowing nose or you touch an object that was previously touched or used by an infected person.

How do I prevent URTI (Common Cold) transmission?

- **Hand washing**

Washing hands with soap and water is the most important measure to reduce transmission of micro-organisms from one person to another. You should wash your hands after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.

- **Covering of face during coughing/sneezing**

Turn your face away from others and cover your mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing and properly dispose of the tissue papers. This prevents spreading your cold to other people.





- **Avoid close contact with others**

Try to stay away from crowded places during the two to three days of your cold, especially in winters.

- **Adequate rest**

Avoid over exertion and strenuous exercises. Sound sleep of at least eight to ten hours will help your body recover early and will also relieve symptoms of tiredness and fatigue.

- **High nutrition diet and increased fluid intake**

Drink at least 8 to 10 glasses of fluids per day for example:

- water
- fruit juice
- tea
- clear soup

Take fruits and vegetable in your diet. This will help your immune system to recover fast. Avoid sharing your food or drinks – avoid using other people's utensils.

- **Vaccination against influenza virus**

Any person can have vaccination. Annual Influenza virus vaccination is especially recommended for:

- elderly
- young children
- people with low immunity
- chronic medical conditions like diabetes mellitus, chronic renal failure, asthma, COPD etc.
- health care professional

This will help decrease frequent and severe episodes of influenza. Flu vaccine can be given in fall season, from October to April.



What are the possible complications from having a cold?

The following are some of the complications that might occur if you get a cold:

- ear infection
- sinus infection
- pneumonia
- throat infection

When should i see a health care provider?

See your health care provider when you have any of the following symptoms:

- temperature of 102°F (38.9°C) or higher and not responding to medications
- shaking chills
- difficulty breathing/whistling sounds from chest
- chest pain
- skin rash
- worsening sore throat
- yellowish/green sputum
- white or yellow spots on your tonsils or throat
- a cough that gets worse or becomes painful
- severe headache
- mental confusion
- blue or gray lips, skin or nails
- worsening earache

Your health care provider will evaluate whether you need antibiotic or not.

What is the Treatment of URTI?

Non-Pharmacological

- rest - to help your body recover faster and to relieve symptoms of tiredness and fatigue.
- increase fluid intake
- hot saline gargles
- steam inhalation
- increase vitamin C intake



Specific treatment should be taken after consultation with a physician

- Over the counter Paracetamol should be taken for fever and aches. This medicine can be taken without a doctor's prescription for two to three days every six hours, if symptoms persist please contact your physician.
- Common cold does not respond to antibiotics as it is caused by viruses and their use will not reduce the recovery time of this viral illness.
- Vaccinations are contra-indicated during high grade fever.

CHC
Aga Khan University Hospital
Karachi
Phone: 021 3486 1499