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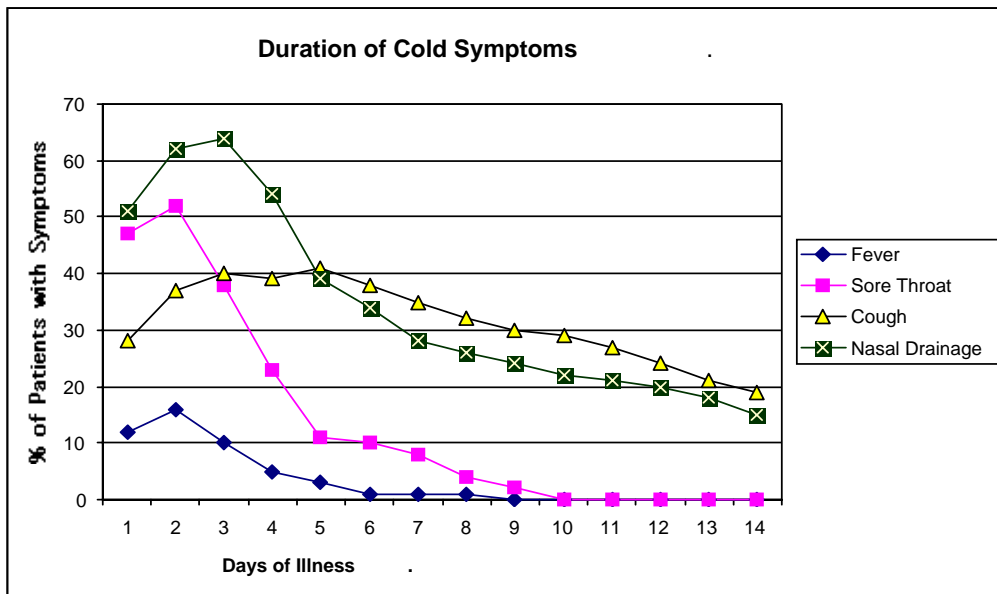
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WINTER WELLNESS (3/05)

Many factors play a role in the development of the common cold. Although it is certain that a virus is the last straw precipitating a cold, many other factors make a clinical infection more likely. We are all exposed to numerous viruses, but we are at certain times more or less susceptible depending on the status of our body's natural resistance. Factors such as dry nasal linings from forced air heating or relative dehydration from caffeinated and alcoholic beverages are commonly found.

Almost all cases (98%) of new onset purulent nasal discharge are due to viruses, not bacteria. Antibiotics are ineffective against viruses. The severity of symptoms and the color of the discharge (clear, yellow, or green) are of no help distinguishing between bacterial or viral infection. The only reliable factor to reliably distinguish between viral and bacterial nasal infections is the duration of symptoms. Colds that have not improved after 10 to 14 days or have worsened after 5 to 7 days start increasing the risk of a bacterial infection.



Since there are no direct cure for viral infections in the nose, we must rely on the body's natural resistance (immune system) to help prevent these infections or shorten the duration and severity of a viral illness when it does occur. Below are some helpful suggestions for when you feel a cold may be starting or when you are at higher risk for developing a cold.

Zinc Therapy

Certain over-the-counter formulations of zinc have been proven to significantly shorten the duration and severity of the common cold. The exact reason is still unknown. Zinc gluconate lozenges (Cold Ezz) have proven to be effective when taken as directed. However, not all zinc lozenges are effective. This seems to be related to the use of formulations that do not allow the release of ionized zinc into the oral cavity. Please keep in mind that zinc therapy is not recommended for children.

Echinacea Purpurea Root/Goldenseal

This herbal treatment stimulates natural resistance by boosting the immune system. This is available over-the-counter but should not be taken for longer than two weeks at a time (See *Echinacea and Goldenseal* handout).

Vitamin C

Vitamin C boosts the immune system. The suggested dosage varies between 500-4,000 mg each day. It seems reasonable to stay on regular low doses during cold season, while increasing the dose when symptoms first appear.

Hydration and Nasal Moisturization

Keeping the nasal linings moist by drinking more fluids is extremely beneficial. (See *Nose and Sinus Hygiene* handout). You should avoid caffeinated beverages, which dehydrate the body and nose. Use of nasal saline sprays keeps the nose moist. A moist nose is able to sweep all irritants and particles on its membranes into the throat to be swallowed every 10 minutes. When the nose is dry, this self-cleaning mechanism is impaired. Irritants and viruses thereby have more time to irritate or gain entry to the membranes and cause infection. If you have pre-existing conditions in the nose (nasal allergy, septal deviation, sinusitis, etc) or impaired resistance (diabetes, chronic disease, etc), it may be necessary to assist the nose in maintaining normal hygiene with high-volume nasal saline irrigations (See *Nasal Saline Irrigation* handout).

Stress Reduction and Exercise

It is a known fact that stress weakens your body's immune system. Exercise is the perfect antidote. It helps strengthen the body and alleviates the body's mental and physical stress. Adequate sleep is also essential in maintaining normal immunity.