

### **Viral Respiratory Infection: Care Instructions**

#### **Your Care Instructions**

Viruses are very small organisms. They grow in number after they enter your body. There are many types that cause different illnesses, such as colds and the mumps.

The symptoms of a viral respiratory infection often start quickly. They include a fever, sore throat, and runny nose. You may also just not feel well. Or you may not want to eat much.

Most viral respiratory infections are not serious. They usually get better with time and self-care.

Antibiotics are not used to treat a viral infection. That's because antibiotics will not help cure a viral illness. In some cases, antiviral medicine can help your body fight a serious viral infection.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

#### **How can you care for yourself at home?**

- Rest as much as possible until you feel better.
- Be safe with medicines. Take your medicine exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. You will get more details on the specific medicine your doctor prescribes.
- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve), as needed for pain and fever. Read and follow all instructions on the label. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.
- Drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. Hot fluids, such as tea or soup, may help relieve congestion in your nose and throat. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- Try to clear mucus from your lungs by breathing deeply and coughing.
- Gargle with warm salt water once an hour. This can help reduce swelling and throat pain. Use 1 teaspoon of salt mixed in 1 cup of warm water.
- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke around you. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

#### **To avoid spreading the virus**

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue. Then throw the tissue away.
- If you don't have a tissue, use your hand to cover your cough or sneeze. Then clean your hand. You can also cough into your sleeve.
- Wash your hands often. Use soap and warm water. Wash for 15 to 20 seconds each time.
- If you don't have soap and water near you, you can clean your hands with alcohol wipes or gel.

#### **When should you call for help?**

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have a new or higher fever.
- Your fever lasts more than 48 hours.
- You have trouble breathing.
- You have a fever with a stiff neck or a severe headache.
- You are sensitive to light.
- You feel very sleepy or confused.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.