

## SELF SUPPORT FOR MINOR HEALTH PROBLEMS

### Get the Right Treatment

Every year, millions of us visit our GP with minor health problems that can be easily resolved without a doctor's appointment.

It is estimated that every year, 50 million visits to the GP are made for minor ailments such as coughs and colds, mild eczema, and athlete's foot. By visiting your pharmacy instead, you could save yourself time and trouble.

### Self-care



Keeping a well-stocked medicine cabinet at home can help you treat many minor ailments. Colds, coughs, indigestion and many other minor complaints can all be treated with medicines that are available over the counter.

Your pharmacist can advise on what you might find useful to keep in your medicine cabinet. Always follow the instructions on the medicine label and consult your doctor if the illness continues or becomes more severe.

### Your Local Pharmacist



Pharmacists offer professional free health advice at any time - you don't need an appointment. From coughs and colds to aches and pains, they can give you expert help on everyday illnesses. They can answer questions about prescribed and over-the-counter medicines. Your local Pharmacist can also advise on healthy eating.

Pharmacists can also advise on health eating, obesity and giving up smoking. Some pharmacists have private areas where you can talk in confidence. They may suggest you visit your GP for more serious symptoms. It is possible to purchase many medicines from the chemist without a prescription.

## Accident & Emergency (A&E)

Major A&E departments assess and treat patients who have serious injuries or illnesses. Generally, you should visit A&E or call 999 for emergencies, such as:

- loss of consciousness,
- pain that is not relieved by simple analgesia,
- acute confused state,
- persistent, severe chest pain, or
- breathing difficulties.

If you're injured or seriously ill, you should go, or be taken, to A&E. If an ambulance is needed you can call 999, the emergency phone number in the UK. You can also dial 112, which is the equivalent for the European Union.

Major A&E departments offer access 365 days a year and usually open 24 hours a day. Be aware that not all hospitals have an A&E department.

## Diarrhoea

Acute diarrhoea is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection and affects almost everyone from time to time. A common cause in both children and adults is gastroenteritis, an infection of the bowel.

Bouts of diarrhoea in adults may also be brought on by anxiety or drinking too much coffee or alcohol. Diarrhoea may also be a side effect of a medication

### [NHS Choices](#)

Symptoms, causes, treatment and information

### [Macmillan Cancer Support](#)

Diarrhoea as a result of cancer treatments

## Coughs & Colds

A cold is a mild viral infection of the nose, throat, sinuses and upper airways. It can cause nasal stuffiness, a runny nose, sneezing, a sore throat and a cough. **Usually it's a self-limiting infection – this means it gets better by itself without the need for treatment.**

On average, adults have two to five colds each year and school-age children can have up to eight colds a year. Adults who come into contact with children tend to get more colds. This is because children usually carry more of the virus, for longer.

In the UK, you're more likely to get a cold during the winter months although the reasons why aren't fully understood at present.

## Treatment of a cold



For most people, a cold will get better on its own within a week of the symptoms starting without any specific treatment. However, there are treatments that can help to ease your symptoms and make you feel more comfortable. These are available from your pharmacy, which means that you can treat yourself, rather than needing to see your GP.

There is no cure for colds. Antibiotics, which treat infections caused by bacteria, don't work on cold viruses.

## Self-help

There are a number of self-help measures that may help to ease the symptoms of a cold.

- Drinking enough fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Steam inhalations with menthol, salt water nasal sprays or drops may be helpful.
- Vapour rubs may help relieve symptoms for children.
- Hot drinks (particularly with lemon), hot soups and spicy foods can help to ease irritation and pain in your throat.
- Sucking sweets or lozenges which contain menthol or eucalyptus may sooth your throat.
- Gargling with salt water may help a sore throat.

You should try to make sure you get enough rest if you have a cold. It's not usually necessary to stay off work or school.

### [Colds & Flu](#)

A factsheet on the causes, symptoms, treatment & prevention of colds & the flu

### [NHS Choices - is it the common cold or the flu?](#)

Colds and flu can share some of the same symptoms (sneezing, coughing, sore throat) but are caused by different viruses, and flu can be much more serious. Find out

### [Factsheet - Common Cold](#)

Information about the diagnosis, treatment and symptoms of the common cold