

Self-Care – Cough, Cold & Sore Throat

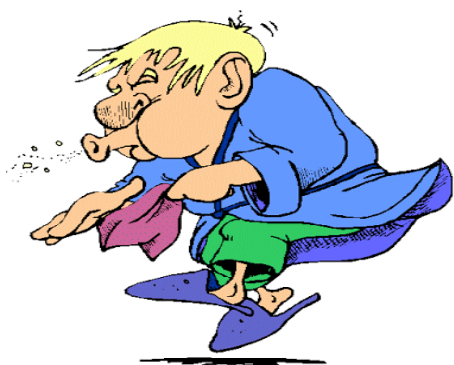
Taking care of your “SELF” – Supporting Everyone to Live Freely

This is a self-care guide designed for those working in care homes, residential homes and assisted living.

The information provided in this guide does not replace person centred clinical advice.

The following information should be used as a guide when advising or purchasing self-care treatments for people residing in a care home, residential home or assisted living. Self-care medication and medical products are not always the most appropriate choice for treating minor ailments. Sometimes starting with a lifestyle change or trying natural remedies can be more effective.

Should you have any concern, at any time around self-care items being purchased on behalf of the resident or being brought in by relatives for the residents use, please discuss with your community pharmacist or GP practice.



A cold is, in the majority of cases, due to a mild viral infection of the nose, throat, sinuses and upper airways. It's very common and usually clears up on its own within a week or two.

The main symptoms of a cold include:

- sore throat
- blocked or runny nose
- sneezing
- cough



Advice for treating a common cold and related symptoms:

➤ Plenty of fluids

- Drinking plenty helps break up congestion, makes your throat moist, and keeps you from getting dehydrated
- Encourage drinking cool or warm food and fluids, avoiding very hot drinks
- Review meals and offer cool, softer foods
- Ice cubes or ice lollies are good for soothing a dry throat

➤ Try sucking on boiled sweets

- Stimulating the production of saliva will help to keep the throat moist which will relieve soreness and irritation
- Lozenges are available to purchase over the counter; always read the packet for recommended amounts to be consumed per day
- Assess each individual resident, checking for risk of choking
- Review suitability for types of boiled sweets i.e. sugar free for diabetic residents

➤ Gargle warm, salty water


- Assess suitability and appropriateness for each individual resident, checking for any swallowing difficulties. **Please note** - You will need to discuss salt gargles with the community pharmacist or GP before assisting any resident on a low sodium diet

➤ Tissues

- Make sure the resident has a supply of soft tissues so that they are able to blow their nose regularly, this will help to clear the congestion and trap germs
- Be aware that residents may have preference as to which tissues they like to use i.e. tissues can sometimes contain aloe-vera to help reduce cracking and soreness

➤ Regular hand washing

- Encourage regular hand washing with warm water and soap

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- Residents may want to purchase hand sanitiser as an extra form of protection against spreading germs, they should not replace regular hand washing

➤ **Painkillers**

- If appropriate, the resident may wish to take over-the-counter (OTC) painkillers to help reduce any fever or discomfort
- If you have a homely remedy policy in place in your care home, then you could refer to this
- If asked to purchase OTC painkillers on the resident's behalf or if a resident's relatives bring these in for use, it is recommended that you seek advice from the community pharmacist before you purchase or before the resident takes them
- It is always best to seek advice from the community pharmacist who dispenses prescriptions for the resident as they will have access to the resident's records and will be able to advise if these are appropriate. If you are unable to see the resident's regular community pharmacist, please provide the community pharmacist with the list of the resident's regular medicines so that they can advise appropriately
- Always check for drug interactions before giving any over the counter medicines to any resident

➤ **Decongestant Nasal Sprays**

- While we do not routinely recommend the use of decongestant sprays or tablets to relieve a blocked nose due to lack of evidence to support their effectiveness, if a resident would like to purchase one of these it is advised to always seek advice from the regular community pharmacist before purchasing

If you do not use the resident's regular community pharmacist please provide the community pharmacist with the list of the residents regularly used medicines so that they can advise

- Always check for drug interactions before giving any over the counter medicines to your residents

Ensure residents have no documented swallowing problems before recommending certain self-care approaches and remedies

Contact the GP if:

- Symptoms do not improve after one week
- Symptoms get suddenly worse
- Temperature is very high, they complain about feeling hot or are hot to the touch and they are shivery
- They complain that it is hard to breathe or have developed chest pain
- They have a long-term medical condition – for example, diabetes or a heart, lung, kidney or neurological disease
- **You are concerned about the resident and their condition**

Important note for Antibiotic use:

- Antibiotics are not available over the counter for self-care
- GPs do not recommend the use of antibiotics for colds because they won't relieve symptoms or speed up recovery
- Antibiotics are only effective against bacterial infections and most common colds are caused by viruses

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References:

NHS Choices - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/common-cold/>