

Treating your Respiratory tract infection (RTI)



Your infection

- ☐ Middle-ear infection
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Sinusitis
- ☐ Common cold
- ☐ Cough or bronchitis
- ☐ Other infection

Most are better by

3 days¹ (can last 7 to 8 days²)
7 to 8 days^{2,3,4}
14 to 21 days⁵
14 days⁴
3 to 4 weeks^{3,6,7}
..... days

How to look after yourself and your family

- Have plenty of rest⁸.
- Drink enough fluids to avoid feeling thirsty⁹.
- Ask your local pharmacist to recommend medicines to help reduce your symptoms or pain (or both).
- Fever is a sign your body is fighting the infection. It usually gets better by itself in most cases. You can use paracetamol if you (or your

child) are uncomfortable because of a fever¹⁰.
• Use a tissue to cover coughs and sneezes and wash your hands with soap to help prevent spreading infection to your family, friends and other people¹¹.

Never share antibiotics and always return any unused antibiotics to a pharmacy for them to dispose of safely.

When to get help

If any of the below apply to you or your child, get an urgent assessment from a healthcare professional. If your child is under the age of 5, go to A&E immediately or call 999.

- Your skin is very cold¹² or has a strange colour¹³, or you develop an unusual rash¹³.
- You have new feelings of confusion or drowsiness or have slurred speech¹⁴.
- You have difficulty breathing¹⁵. Signs that suggest breathing problems include:
 - breathing quickly
 - turning blue around the lips and the skin below the mouth, and
 - skin between or above the ribs getting sucked or pulled in with every breath.

If you (or your child) have any of the following symptoms, are getting worse or are sicker than you would expect (even if your temperature falls), trust your instincts and get medical advice urgently from NHS 111 or your GP.

- You develop a severe headache and are sick¹⁴.
- You have a red, swollen tongue¹³.
- You have redness, swelling and pain around the eyes or the ears^{16,17}.
- You develop chest pain¹⁸.
- You have difficulty swallowing or are drooling¹⁹.
- You cough up blood¹⁹.
- You are peeing very little, or not at all¹⁴.
- You are feeling a lot worse²⁰⁻²³.
- Your child has a middle-ear infection and fluid is coming out of their ears or they have new deafness^{15,24}.

Less serious signs that can usually wait until you visit a pharmacist or your next available GP appointment

- You are not starting to improve a little by the time given in the 'Most are better by' column in the table above²⁰⁻²³.
- You have mild side effects such as diarrhoea²⁵ Get advice from a healthcare professional if you are concerned.

Back-up antibiotic collection

Back-up antibiotic prescription to be collected after days from / / only if you are not starting to feel a little better or you feel worse.

- Colds, most coughs, sinusitis, ear infections, sore throats and other infections often get better without antibiotics, as your body can usually fight these infections on its own⁷.

If you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. Never save them for later and do not share them with others. For more information, visit www.antibioticguardian.com.

Why it is important to take antibiotics as prescribed

Taking any antibiotics makes bacteria that live inside your body more resistant. This means that antibiotics may not work when you really need them²⁶.

Antibiotics can cause side effects such as rashes, thrush, stomach pains, diarrhoea, reactions to sunlight, other symptoms, or being sick if you drink alcohol with the antibiotic metronidazole.

Keep Antibiotics Working

References

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