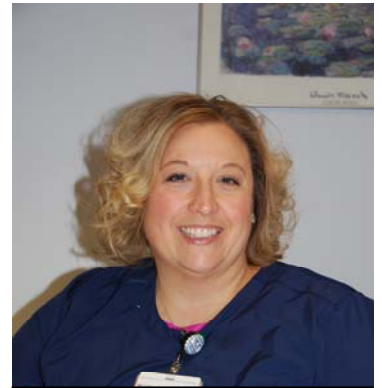


## ***What is an acute upper respiratory infection?***

Upper respiratory infections (URIs) are one of the most common reasons for doctor visits. They are the most common illness resulting in missed work or school. Upper respiratory tract infections, are the illnesses caused by an acute infection which involves the upper respiratory tract: nose, sinuses, pharynx or larynx. An Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) is another name for the common cold. A cold is caused by a virus that can settle in your nose, throat or lungs. This causes a runny or stuffy nose and sneezing. You may also have a sore throat, cough, headache, fever and muscle aches. Upper respiratory infections can happen at any time, but are most common in the fall and winter. Different cold viruses last different lengths of time, but the average time is 2 to 14 days.



***Michelle Matheny, Director  
of HVCH Emergency Room &  
Urgent Care***

## ***How is acute respiratory infection treated?***

There is no cure for the common cold. Your medical provider may prescribe medications to manage your symptoms while monitoring your condition. If he or she suspects a bacterial infection, they may prescribe antibiotics. Antibiotics may be used to treat signs of a secondary infection, but they do not treat the cold virus. Try these tips to keep yourself comfortable:

- ✓ Get plenty of rest.
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids, at least 8 large glasses of fluid a day. Good fluid choices are water, fruit juices high in Vitamin C, tea, gelatin, or broths and soups. These help to keep mucus thin and ease congestion.
- ✓ Use salt water gargle, cough drops or throat sprays to relieve throat pain. Mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt in 1 cup of warm water for a salt water gargle solution.
- ✓ Use petroleum jelly or lip balm around lips and nose to prevent chapping.
- ✓ Use saline nose drops or spray to help ease congestion.
- ✓ Use a Humidifier: A cool mist humidifier can make breathing easier by thinning mucus. Do not use a steam humidifier as hot water can cause burns if spilled.
- ✓ Over the Counter (OTC) Medicines: Read labels carefully. Use a product that treats only the symptoms that you have. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for recommendations. Be sure to ask about possible interactions with other medicines you are taking.

You should also avoid smoking and make sure you include plenty of vitamins in your diet, such as vitamin C, which helps boost your immune system.

## ***Practice good hygiene:***

- ✓ Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after you've been in a public place.
- ✓ Always cough or sneeze into the arm/elbow of your shirt or in a tissue. Although this may not ease your own symptoms, it will prevent you from spreading germs.

- ✓ Avoid touching your face, especially your eyes and mouth, to prevent introducing germs into your system.
- ✓ Do not share cups or utensils.

Talk to your practitioner or others on your health care team if you have any questions.