

# When will I feel better?



## What can I do to get better this winter?

Fed up of having a runny nose?  
Sick of sneezing?  
Tired of having a sore throat?

Here is a helpful guide on how long you can expect your symptoms to last, what you can do to get better and the warning signs to look out for which mean you may need to seek professional help.

Visit [www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell) for more information.

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STAYWELL  
THISWINTER

## Treat yourself better this winter

**Did you know? Antibiotics** are **not** an effective treatment for winter symptoms such as a cough, cold, sore throat, flu or nasal congestion. These symptoms are caused by viruses and antibiotics **only** work against bacteria. If you take antibiotics unnecessarily then they may not work when you need them to treat a bacterial infection.

Why not save yourself a trip to your GP and pop into your local pharmacy **first** for expert advice?

**Over the counter medicines** are available to help relieve your symptoms. Speak to your pharmacist who can help you choose the medicine that will work best for you, advise you on whether you need to see a doctor and provide guidance on self-care and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.



### I've got a **COUGH**, when will I feel better?

You can expect symptoms to last for up to 3 weeks

#### What can I do to treat myself better?

**Try not to cough:** You may be able to cough less often by trying not to cough. Our desire to cough can sometimes be influenced by our brain

**Home remedies:** Try simple home remedies, such as 'honey and lemon' – just add freshly squeezed juice from one lemon and a teaspoon of honey to a mug of hot water. Drink at least 6 to 9 glasses of water in a day and suck lozenges

**Stop smoking:** Smoking is one of the most common reasons for a chronic cough. Stopping smoking, or at least smoking less not only improves your cough, but also benefits your health in other ways (reducing the risk of heart attack, stroke, and lung cancer, for example)



### I've got a **COLD**, when will I feel better?

You can expect symptoms to last for around 1½ weeks

#### What can I do to treat myself better?

**Rest:** Get some rest until you feel better – we usually know when we're well enough to return to normal activities

**Diet:** Eat healthily, including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day

**Fluids:** Drink plenty of fluids to replace those lost from sweating and a runny nose



### I've got a **SORE THROAT**, when will I feel better?

You can expect symptoms to last for around 1 week

#### What can I do to treat myself better?

**Home remedies:** You can relieve symptoms by eating cool, soft food, as well as sucking lozenges, ice cubes, ice lollies or hard sweets. Gargling with warm, salty water may also help reduce swelling and pain

**Smoking:** Avoid smoking and smoky environments as much as you can

**Fluids:** Drink at least 6 to 9 glasses of fluid (preferably water) every day particularly if you also have a fever

### I've got **NASAL CONGESTION**, when will I feel better?

You can expect symptoms to last for around 2½ weeks

#### What can I do to treat myself better?

**Rest:** Get some rest until you feel better

**Face pack:** Applying a warm face pack may help

**Saline solution:** Wash out the nose with a steady stream of saline solution (available from your pharmacy)

**Fluids:** Drink plenty of fluids to replace those lost from sweating and a runny nose

**Food:** Eat healthily, including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day

## What do I need to look out for?

Most symptoms of a **cough, cold, sore throat or nasal congestion** will normally get better between 4 days and 3 weeks and won't be a sign of something more serious. You can treat yourself better during this time without needing to see your GP, and remember antibiotics will **not work** for these symptoms. If however, you notice any of the signs below, speak to your pharmacist or call your doctor's surgery.

### COUGH

**Coughing up blood:** You cough up blood for no obvious reason

**Duration:** Your cough is not getting better within three to four weeks

**Chest or shoulder pain:** In addition to your cough, you have chest and/or shoulder pain

**Breathlessness:** You also find it difficult to breathe

**Weight loss:** You're losing weight for no apparent reason over a period of six weeks or more

**Voice changes:** Your voice becomes hoarse for longer than three weeks, and the hoarseness persists after the cough has settled

**New lumps or swellings:** You notice new swellings anywhere in the neck or above your collarbones

**Symptoms start** after you've choked on something

### COLD

**High fever:** You develop a high temperature (above 39°C), which can be a sign of a more serious type of infection

**Confused:** You're feeling confused or disorientated

**Chest pain:** You notice a sharp pain in your chest

**Phlegm:** You cough up blood-stained phlegm (thick mucus)

**Breathing:** You find it difficult to breathe

**Swelling:** You notice a marked swelling of the glands in your neck and/or armpits

**Duration:** Your symptoms last longer than three weeks

### SORE THROAT

**Duration:** Your symptoms are no better after two weeks

**Frequency:** You have frequent sore throats that do not respond to painkillers

**High fever:** You have a persistent high temperature over 38°C for more than three days that does not come down even if you take ibuprofen and/or paracetamol

**Glandular fever:** A sore throat that doesn't get better

within 10 to 14 days or that gets worse rather than better may suggest glandular fever

**Breathing:** You find it hard to breathe in, and your throat feels like it's closing up

**Drooling and swallowing:** You're drooling and find it difficult to swallow – this is an emergency

**Severity:** Your pain is severe and does not respond to over the counter painkillers

**Voice changes:** Your voice becomes muffled

**Fluid intake:** You find it difficult to drink enough fluids and become dehydrated

**Effect on day to day life:** Your symptoms are so bad that they severely affect your quality of life and prevent you from functioning normally

**HIV/AIDS or other causes of reduced immunity:** If you suffer from a sore throat and have a deficient immune system because, for example, you have HIV/AIDS or you take certain medication (such as chemotherapy, high dose steroids disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs, or a drug called carbimazole)

### NASAL CONGESTION

**High fever:** You develop a high temperature (above 39°C), which can be a sign of a more serious type of infection

**Confused:** You're confused or disorientated

**Other medical conditions:** You're at high risk of complications because you suffer other medical conditions

**Facial pain:** You suffer severe pain or discomfort in your face

**Green/yellow fluid:** Your nose produces lots of thick green/yellow fluid

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