

## **St. Edward's University Health Services**

**Phone: (512) 448-8686**

### **Colds and Sore Throats**

Colds and most sore throats are caused by viral infections that can last for 7 – 10 days. Symptoms include sore throat, headache, nasal congestion, cough (wet or dry), runny nose, and sneezing. Flu (influenza), also viral, causes fever, chills, body aches, muscle pain, weakness, and a dry cough. Flu symptoms start suddenly and escalate rapidly.

*Antibiotics are of no value in treating colds, flu, or any viral illnesses. Antibiotics are effective only for bacterial infections. Health Services staff do not prescribe antibiotics for colds and flu unless there is evidence of a bacterial infection.*

### **Treating Symptoms**

1. Take an over the counter (OTC) decongestant such as pseudoephedrine (Sudafed - you have to ask the pharmacist for this) or phenylephrine if you have sinus/nasal stuffiness.
2. Take an OTC antihistamine such as loratadine (Claritin), cetirizine (Zyrtec), or chlorpheniramine if you have sneezing, itchy watery eyes, or a runny nose.
3. Take OTC pain relievers and fever reducers such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve).
4. Sleep with head elevated so nasal passages can drain.
5. Drink 8 to 10 glasses (1 glass = 8 ounces) of liquids a day. Try hot lemon water with honey, herbal or green teas but avoid dairy.
6. Eat hot, spicy foods and hot soups.
7. Gargle with warm salt water for about a minute 4 times a day or more. You can gargle with mouth wash too.

### **Prevention**

1. Wash hands frequently especially after touching things like door knobs, computers, menus, grocery carts, etc. Wash vigorously rubbing hands together for at least 10 seconds.
2. Avoid touching the face – nose and mouth.
3. Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
4. Don't share utensils, food, or drinks.