

DR. OZ THE GOOD LIFE

# Handbook

Cold Relief | NOVEMBER 2015



RED AND  
STUFFY?  
NOT FOR  
LONG!

## GET WELL SOONER

*This hour-by-hour guide will speed you  
from achoo to already over it.*

**DON'T  
PUSH FOR  
AN RX.**

**7 00 AM** *Call in sick*

The first morning when you wake up feeling as if a cold has moved in—you're stuffy, a cough is brewing, and your brain is far from focused—you need unlimited access to rest. Don't think you're being a hero by dragging yourself in to work. You'll likely just feel lousy for longer, says Chris D'Adamo, Ph.D., director of research at the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. And you'll be spreading your germs: You're most contagious for the first two to three days of a cold, when you're sneezing and coughing up a storm.

**7 15 AM** *Steam up, rinse out*

Climb into a hot shower. Warm, moist air helps hydrate the membranes in your nose and throat, so mucus can drain more freely, says Sezelle Gereau Haddon, M.D., an ear, nose, and throat specialist with the Center for Health and Healing at Mount Sinai Beth Israel in New York. When you get out, you can use a neti pot to help thin and flush away anything that's still stuffing you up, as well as some of the germs in there, she says.

Taking anti-biotics for a standard cold is like using weed killer to get rid of ants—wrong product for the job. Viruses cause colds; antibiotics fight bacteria. Your doc (and an Rx) can't do much unless you have something other than a basic cold (such as vomiting, major chest congestion, a high fever, or a very sore throat).



**8 00 AM** *Time for tea*

Pour yourself a steaming cup of just about anything—it may help with the congested feeling. Even better: Fill that mug with echinacea tea, which may reduce cold symptoms. Follow it with a little something to eat.

HELLO,  
TEA—  
GOODBYE,  
MISERY

## 8 30 AM **Take a probiotic**

Chase breakfast with a probiotic pill. A review published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* found that people who took probiotic supplements or had probiotic yogurt drinks containing lactobacillus and bifidobacterium strains got over their colds faster (look for those strains in the pills, too).

Also start popping zinc lozenges. Research has found that these may shorten the duration of a cold, as long as you start them within 24 hours of when you first feel it coming on. Take them with food to reduce the chance of a grumbly stomach.

## 10 30 AM **Head back to bed**

You can't recuperate as easily if you don't get enough rest. Tiredness is one way nature tells us to devote our energy to the immune response instead of running around, notes Christopher Coe, Ph.D., director of the Harlow Center for Biological Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Makes sense, right?

## 10 45 AM **Tackle congestion**

Can't nap because your nose is too clogged? Try opening things up with a saline nasal mist. Or consider a medicated decongestant nasal spray, says Lawrence J. Cohen, Pharm.D., a professor of pharmacotherapy at the University of North Texas System College of Pharmacy. These sprays target swelling in your nasal passages much more quickly than pills do.



If you are congested but need to stay up—say, you *had* to go in to work—look for a decongestant med that contains pseudoephedrine, says Cohen. That's the stuff (in products like Sudafed Congestion) that's usually behind the counter, not the related formulation (phenylephrine) on the shelves. Got more than congestion? Use our cold medicine decoder on the last page of this handbook to find the product you need.

## 12 30 PM **Eat some lunch**

Even when your appetite is down, don't say no to chicken soup. The hot broth helps ease congestion (the way your breakfast beverage did), and the saltiness makes you thirsty, so you'll hydrate with other liquids, says Joan Salge Blake, R.D.N., a clinical associate professor at Boston University. When someone you love makes that soup? Even more soothing.

**2 00 PM** ***Walk it off***

If you have symptoms just from the chin up (cough, sore throat, runny nose), with no fever, swollen glands, or achiness, get yourself outside for a short walk. Experts believe that moderate exercise helps antibodies and infection-fighting white blood cells circulate through your body more rapidly. Don't get too ambitious, though: Intense workouts can weaken the immune system, which won't help you get better.

**3 00 PM** ***Cue up some Modern Family***

Pretty bored by now, eh? Tuning in to a little funny stuff might give your immune system a nudge. (If you've been

slugging it out at work, put on your earphones and indulge in a short LOL session.) Laughing revs the activity of certain antibodies that destroy bacteria and viruses, says research from Loma Linda University. Plus, you deserve a smile about now.

**6 00 PM** ***Dinnertime***

You might not feel much like having a meal, but you need fuel—especially if you have a fever, since your body is using a lot of energy to fight this thing, says D'Adamo. Whip up a quick stir-fry and include thin slices of beef (for zinc), plenty of mushrooms (they contain potential immune boosters called beta-glucans), and loads of crushed garlic (for antimicrobial allicin).



## **8 00 PM** Set the stage for a better night

For most people, cold symptoms get worse at night, says Gereau Haddon, especially when you first lie down. That's when you're likely to cough more because of mucus dripping along the back of your nose and down your throat.

Before bed, take all that sniffing and hacking down a notch with a mini steam room. Start by boiling some water and pouring it into a large bowl. Drape a towel loosely over your head as you lean over the bowl (not too close!), and breathe deeply for a few minutes. Dr. Oz likes to add a few drops of oregano oil to the water. Then, keep the hydration going all night with a humidifier.

## **9 00 PM** Take meds that will ease your sleep

To avoid having your symptoms wake you later, choose nighttime formulations of any medicines. Or try a natural sleep aid: D'Adamo recommends 1 to 3 mg of melatonin (a sleep hormone) 30 minutes before bed. Choose a timed-release formula, he says, so the effects are spread throughout the night.

## **9 30 PM** Lights-out

Yes, it's early, but that's the point. "Rest is what's really going to help speed along the recovery process," says D'Adamo. Rearrange your pillows to elevate your head and neck comfortably; that will ease sinus pressure and help you breathe easier.



## **DAY 2 AND BEYOND**

Get more rest than you think you need. If you go to work, that should be all you do—cancel all evening plans and conk out super early. "If you've been taking zinc or echinacea, keep that going until you've completely recovered," says D'Adamo. Decongestants and cough meds? "You'll probably need to continue for a few days, but after the second day, try using them less frequently." On the third day, make sure you stop the nasal sprays; it's hard to wean yourself from them after that.

## OTC MEDS MADE SIMPLE

Focus on your most annoying symptom, and buy a formula designed to target *that*. Watch out for combo products: They make it easy to double-dose with certain ingredients, says Lawrence J. Cohen, Pharm.D. Battling multi-symptoms? Ask the pharmacist to recommend products that are safe to take together.



### YOU HAVE:

### THE RIGHT MED TO TRY:

**Chest congestion**  
(a full, heavy feeling)

An expectorant. It helps break up mucus, so you can cough it out. Look for the ingredient **guaifenesin** (that's what's in products like Robitussin Mucus+Chest Congestion and Mucinex Expectorant), says Scott Drab, Pharm.D., an associate professor of pharmacy and therapeutics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy.

**A constant hacking cough**

A cough suppressant such as **dextromethorphan** (in Robitussin Long-Acting Cough). It essentially shuts off the cough center in your brain, to keep you from hacking, says Cohen. Some products also contain ingredients that calm the back of your throat, eliminating a physical trigger for the problem.

**A really stuffy nose**

If a saline product doesn't work, you can try a nasal spray with **oxymetazoline**. Limit use to three days or you could get rebound congestion, leaving you stuffier than before. These sprays force nasal blood vessels shut, and when they wear off, the vessels over-compensate and become extra swollen, requiring more spray to bring the swelling down. That's a cycle you don't want to get into.

**A stuffy nose plus sinus pressure**

Cohen recommends a decongestant with **pseudoephedrine** (in products like Sudafed Congestion). The downside: It can make people feel a little jumpy.

**A sore throat**

A lozenge or spray with a numbing agent like **benzocaine** or **phenol**. For mild scratchiness, look for lozenges with **pectin** (in some formulas of Luden's or Sucrets).

**Note:** Always ask a health care professional about your specific medical needs. This information is not individual medical advice and may not be appropriate for you.