Common Cold

What is a cold?
The common cold is a contagious viral infection of the head and chest. The nose, throat, sinuses, ears, eustachian tubes, trachea, larynx, and bronchial tubes may be involved.

What causes a cold?
More than 200 viruses can cause the common cold. They are spread through the air in droplets from coughing or sneezing or from person-to-person contact, especially handshaking.

What are the symptoms?
Symptoms include sore throat, hoarseness, cough, fatigue, watering eyes, appetite loss, ear congestion, facial pain, and runny or stuffy nose. Cold viruses provoke a massive immune response (sneezing, inflammation, and secretions), including an increase in certain types of immune cells that may add yellow or greenish color to the discharge.

How should I treat a cold?

- Avoid strenuous physical activity and get plenty of rest.
- Drink extra fluids, including water, fruit juice, tea, and carbonated beverages.
- Use saline nasal spray or Afrin, as directed.
- Use a cool-mist humidifier.
- Use nonprescription medicine to relieve symptoms, acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil), decongestants (Sudafed), cough remedies, and throat lozenges.
- Neither antibiotics nor nonprescription medicines will cure the common cold.

When should I be concerned this is not just a cold?
If you develop any of the following symptoms, call the Student Health Center Dial-A-Nurse (289-8700):

- Temperature of 101° F
- Shaking chills
- Skin rash
- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Earache or headache
- Pain in the teeth or sinuses
- Unusual fatigue
- White or yellow spots on tonsils or throat
- Severe cough or a cough that lasts more than 10 days