

# Nonspecific Upper Respiratory Tract Infection in Children, Adolescents, and Adults

## Key points

- Nonspecific upper respiratory tract infection (URI), or the “common cold,” is caused by viral pathogens
- Symptoms may last up to 10-14 days
- Treatment with an antibiotic does not shorten duration of illness or prevent bacterial sinusitis
- Purulent green or yellow secretions alone are not predictive of bacterial infection

## Possible signs and symptoms of nonspecific URI or the “common cold”:

- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion or discharge
- Cough
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Malaise
- Low-grade fever

## Differential diagnosis:

- Acute bronchitis
- Acute rhinosinusitis
- Acute pharyngitis
- Allergic rhinitis
- Pertussis\*
- Influenza\*

Clinical picture consistent with nonspecific URI

## Antibiotic therapy not indicated\*

### Recommend specific symptomatic therapy:

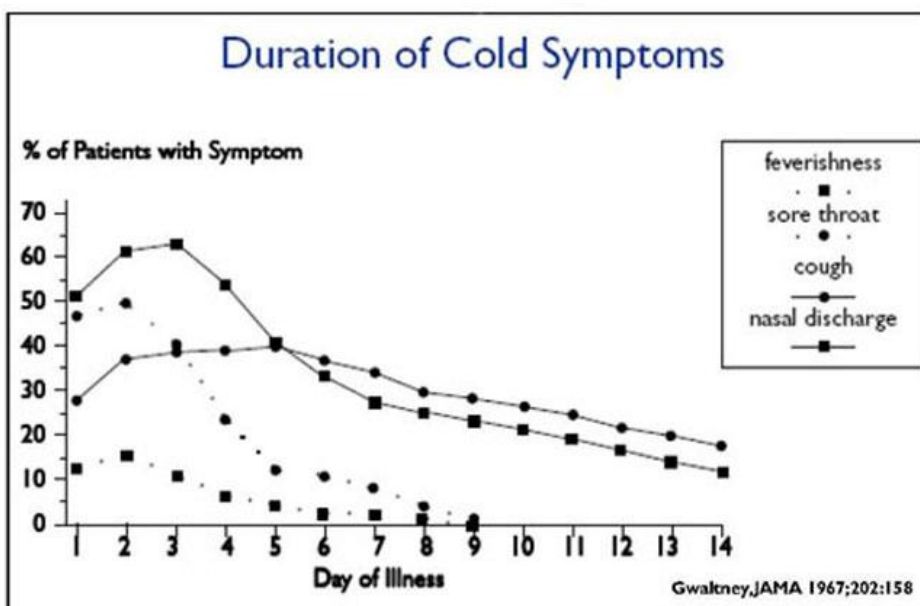
#### Children

- Encourage fluids
- Fever control (acetaminophen or NSAIDs)

#### Adults

- Dextromethorphan or codeine for cough
- Acetaminophen or NSAIDs for fever/pain
- Consider decongestant

Implement communication tips from page 1



**Note:** This is intended only as a guide for evidence-based decision-making; it is not intended to replace clinical judgment

**References:** <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/campaign-materials/info-sheets/adult-nurti.html> (accessed 12/30/09);

<http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/campaign-materials/info-sheets/child-rhin-vs-sinus.html> (accessed 12/30/09)

\*If pertussis or influenza are suspected, initiate diagnostic testing and consider empiric therapy