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

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*

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

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

References:
http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/campaign-materials/info-sheets/adult-nurti.html (accessed 12/30/09);
*If pertussis or influenza are suspected, initiate diagnostic testing and consider empiric therapy