

Press Release



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THE BEST SOURCE OF HELP FOR FLU – YOUR LOCAL PHARMACIST

Every year there seems to be a new flu bug – this year it's the 'Autumn Flu'. According to the National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA), which represents the nation's community pharmacists, it's not as bad as full-blown influenza but worse than a common cold - and certainly bad enough to make you feel miserable. So far up to 3 million people have been affected across the UK.

There's always confusion with the difference between the two. Basically they are both virus based, but a cold usually starts gradually when you get a sore throat and stuffy or runny nose; flu hits you more suddenly and tends to be so severe that it's difficult to get out of bed. Flu symptoms affect much of the body – and include fever, chills, headaches and aching muscles and you can often get a cough and sore throat at the same time.

The symptoms most common to this year's 'Autumn Flu' seem to be a sore throat, bunged up or runny nose and chest congestion. This particular flu virus is also lasting much longer than normal flu - with some patients suffering 2-3 weeks, instead of a few days.

John D'Arcy, Chief Executive of the NPA, advises: "If you succumb to a bad cold or the latest flu bug, do remember to check with your pharmacist before buying, or taking, any over-the-counter medicines. This is particularly important if you are taking other remedies. There are a number of cold and flu remedies available from your local pharmacy to help alleviate the symptoms – and painkillers to reduce fever and relieve aches and pains. However, people with stomach problems or asthma should avoid aspirin and ibuprofen. Your pharmacist will recommend a suitable medicine for you – and will be happy to answer any questions or concerns. And don't hesitate to contact him should symptoms persist."

Other practical self-help tips include:

- If you have a runny nose, it may help to smooth pure petroleum jelly around your nostrils to prevent them getting dry and sore with all that excess blowing!
- If your nose is blocked, add a teaspoon of vapour rub, or one or two menthol crystals to a pint of steaming hot water in a bowl. Lean over the bowl, with a towel over your head to trap the steam and inhale. Do this for 10 minutes three times a day
- Ensure you get sufficient rest – extra sleep or bed-rest helps recovery
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat as much as you feel able to

John D'Arcy suggests: "You can always ask your pharmacist about the preventative flu jab which is free to 'at risk' groups. (If you are 65+ years, have a suppressed immune system or suffer from diabetes, heart, lung or kidney problems you are more susceptible to the complications of flu). It's worth noting that the viruses which cause flu change every year, which means the flu this Winter will be different from last Winter's and therefore, the vaccine will be different."

There is no 'cure' as such for colds or flu, but the good news is that a healthy dose of advice and effective remedies to relieve the symptoms are available from your local pharmacy. So when you're fighting the 'cold war' remember to take your pharmacist's advice before taking anything else!

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Notes to editors

1. The National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA) is the trade association that represents the professional and commercial interests of the owners of around 11,000 community pharmacies in the United Kingdom.
2. If you would like to arrange a media interview with a pharmacist local to your area, please contact the Press Office on 01727 858687 Exts 3265, 3227 or 3311. Alternatively, you can e-mail us at press.office@npa.co.uk
www.askyourpharmacist.co.uk
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