

The Terrace Medical Centre
VIRAL RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

Viral respiratory illnesses are particularly common in winter but can be caught throughout the year, and they're extremely common for children and infants in particular. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the health benefits of keeping symptoms of respiratory viruses out of our waiting room where they may infect other patients, so we are maintaining our precautions for any respiratory symptoms. COVID-19, the flu (influenza), and the common cold are all examples of viral respiratory illnesses.

What are the symptoms of a viral respiratory illness?

Some of the common symptoms include:

- Sore throat
- Cough
- Sneezing
- Fever and chills
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Runny/snotty nose
- Body aches

I think I have a viral respiratory illness, do I need to see a doctor?

Many people with a viral respiratory illness may not need a doctor's appointment and can manage their symptoms safely at home – but see below for more information.

What can I do to manage my symptoms and recover from my viral respiratory illness?

If you have symptoms of a viral respiratory illness, you should:

- Stay at home
- Use a RAT to test for COVID-19*
- Take paracetamol to manage headaches, fevers, and body aches (follow dosage instructions on packaging – pay particular attention to age and weight for children and infants)
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Rest
- Use other over-the-counter products such as throat lozenges or gargles as needed to help soothe symptoms (follow dosage instructions on packaging or pharmacist's advice)

*If you test positive for COVID-19, please report your positive result online at www.mycovidrecord.health.nz or by calling 0800 222 478. We will then receive a formal

notification and we will contact you if your doctor has concerns or if you may be eligible for COVID-19 antivirals.

How long will my viral respiratory illness last?

Respiratory viral illnesses will generally clear up in 3-10 days if you follow the above advice.

What symptoms should I be concerned about?

If you or especially your child has any of the following symptoms, please call us as soon as possible for advice:

- Breathing difficulties
- Persistent high fever over 38.5°C
- High fever and a rash
- Difficulty managing fluids/dehydration
- Any fever if your child is under 3 months
- Severe shaking
- Chest pain
- Bluish lips or tongue
- Stiff neck
- Confusion or difficult to wake
- Clammy skin
- Rash with purple or red spots or bruises

However, if you have any concerns about your health or your child's health, regardless of whether these symptoms are present or not, please do not hesitate to call us.

One of our nurses will triage you over the phone first to help determine whether you or your child need a GP appointment, and whether that appointment should be in person or can be over the phone. If an in-person appointment is made for you, you will be asked to wear a mask and wait in our hallway rather than the waiting room, and/or be seen in our isolation room.

I'm managing my symptoms just fine but I need an off-work certificate, do I need a doctor appointment?

Yes. A doctor cannot provide a medical certificate to you without assessing you first.

Do I need antibiotics?

If it's a viral illness, no. Viral illnesses are caused by viruses, which do not respond to antibiotics. Antibiotics are only effective for bacterial infections.

How do I know if my illness is viral or bacterial?

Some signs that your respiratory illness may be bacterial rather than viral include:

- Symptoms lasting longer than 10 days

- Fever worsening a few days into illness rather than improving
- Particularly high fever
- Ear and/or sinus pain
- Coughing up green or yellow phlegm

If you think you have symptoms of a bacterial infection, please get in touch with us as you may need antibiotics.

Antibiotics cannot be prescribed without assessment by a doctor, so you will need an appointment for a bacterial infection diagnosis.

I'm concerned about my/my child's symptoms but you aren't open, what should I do?

There are a few options available to you depending on your level of concern:

- Call Healthline on 0800 611 166 for free advice (available 24/7)
- Use Practice Plus to have a virtual consultation with a GP: www.practiceplus.nz
- Visit your nearest After Hours medical centre for an in-person GP consultation

If you think it's an emergency, call 111 or visit your nearest Emergency Department.