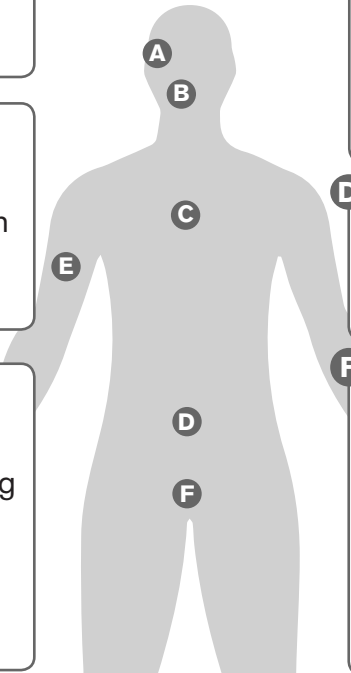


# How can I manage my common infection?

A leaflet for adults aged 16 years and over

## 1. What are the symptoms of a common infection?



**A** **Eyes**

- Sticky eyes

**B** **Ears, nose and throat**

- Pain or soreness
- Runny nose
- Swollen tonsils

**C** **Chest**

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Green or yellow mucus

**D** **Gut**

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea

**E** **Skin**

- Infected blisters
- Redness or swelling around a wound
- Athlete's foot (an itchy rash between the toes)

**F** **Genital and urinary**

- Pain on passing urine
- Passing urine more often at night
- Cloudy urine
- Discharge
- Pain in lower tummy

## 2. What if I think I have coronavirus (Covid-19)?

If you think you may have COVID-19 then please visit <http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> or <http://www.nhs.uk> for the latest guidance and information.

### 3. How can I treat a common infection?



**Get plenty of rest** until you feel better.



**Take pain relief** if you need to (make sure you follow the instructions).



**Drink plenty of fluids** (6 to 8 drinks, or 2 litres) so that you pass pale-coloured urine regularly.



For **coughs**, try honey and cough medicines.  
For **sore throats**, try medicated lozenges and pain relief.



Soothe **eye infections** with a clean warm or cold damp flannel.



For an **outer ear infection**, apply local heat (such as a warm flannel).

### 4. How long could my infection last?

**Cough**



21 days

**Sore throat  
or earache**



7 to 8 days

**Common  
cold**



14 days

**Norovirus**  
(winter vomiting)



2 to 3 days

**Sinus  
infection**



14 to 21 days

**Contact your GP** if your symptoms are getting worse or if you are not better by the times above.

Visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) for **self-care advice** on common infections

## 5. Will my infection need antibiotics to get better?

- Your **body can normally fight off** common infections on its own.
- You do not usually need antibiotics, unless symptoms of a **bacterial** infection (such as a urine infection) are severe – a healthcare professional can advise you on this.
- Taking antibiotics when you do not need to puts you and your family at risk.
- Follow your **healthcare professional's advice on antibiotics**.



Find out more about antibiotics at [www.antibioticguardian.com](http://www.antibioticguardian.com)

## 6. How can I stop my infection from spreading?

If you need to cough or sneeze:

**Catch it**



with a tissue (or your inner elbow)

**Bin it**



throw away used tissues

**Kill it**



by cleaning your hands

**Clean hands** for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or hand sanitiser:

- ✓ before preparing and eating food
- ✓ after touching pets or animals
- ✓ after using the toilet
- ✓ when leaving and arriving home



**Avoid** touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands.

If possible, **keep your distance from others** (2 meters or 6 feet), especially vulnerable people in your household.



**Do not share items** that come into contact with your mouth, such as eating utensils and toothbrushes.



**Keep** yourself and your family **up to date with vaccinations**. **Always get winter vaccines** (such as flu) if you are eligible.

Visit or call a **pharmacy for further advice** on common infections

## 7. What symptoms of serious illness should I look out for?



**Severe** headache and vomiting



Ongoing **fever or chills** (temperature above 38°C or less than 36°C)



Problems **swallowing**  
**Turning blue** around the mouth



Coughing **blood**



**Breathing** faster or slower than usual



**Kidney pain** in your back just under your ribs



**Chest pain** or tightness  
New **very fast or slow pulse**



Visible **blood** in urine  
**Severe pain** on passing urine, or passing more urine at night  
**Cloudy urine** not improving in 1 to 2 days with fluids

**If you have the symptoms above, contact your GP urgently or use the following services for your region.**

NHS England



When it's less urgent than 999

[www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

NHS Direct Wales

**NHS Direct Wales**  
**0845 46 47**  
Galw **IECHYD** Cymru

[www.111.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.111.wales.nhs.uk)

NHS Scotland



[www.nhs24.scot](http://www.nhs24.scot)

Northern Ireland



Project supported by the PHA

**Contact your GP practice**

These services can provide a confidential interpreter if you need one.

## 8. What if I suspect signs of sepsis?

Sepsis is a life-threatening reaction to an infection. Possible signs are:

- **s**lurred speech, confusion or drowsiness
- **e**xtrême shivering
- **p**assing no urine in a day
- **s**evere breathlessness
- **i**t feels like you're going to die, and
- **s**kin blotchy or discoloured.

**Call 999 immediately if you or others have signs of sepsis**