



Public Health  
England

# RESPIRATORY TRACT INFECTION

A step-by-step guide on how to manage your infection



## SELF-CARE STEPS

1. How to help make yourself better
2. Check how long your symptoms last
3. Look out for serious symptoms
4. Where to get help

# 1. HOW TO HELP MAKE YOURSELF BETTER

Whatever your infection, you can do the following to help.



Take paracetamol to reduce a fever; always follow the instructions



Ask your pharmacist for advice on reducing your symptoms



Get plenty of rest until you feel better



Drink enough fluids to avoid feeling thirsty



Use tissues when you sneeze to help stop infections spreading

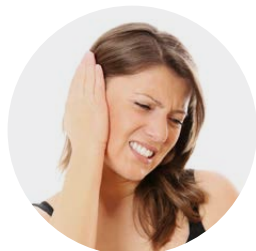


Wash your hands to help stop infections spreading

For more information, visit the NHS website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Most common infections get better without antibiotics. Find out how you can make better use of antibiotics by visiting: [www.antibioticguardian.com](http://www.antibioticguardian.com)

## 2. CHECK HOW LONG YOUR SYMPTOMS LAST



### Earache

Most get better by 8 days

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4



### Sore throat

Most get better by 7-8 days

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4



### Cold

Most get better by 14 days

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4



### Cough

Most get better by 21 days

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

If you are not starting to improve a little by the times given above, seek advice from your GP practice.

If you are feeling a lot worse, phone **NHS 111, NHS Direct Wales or NHS 24** (see step 4).

### 3. LOOK OUT FOR SERIOUS SYMPTOMS

If you have an infection and develop any of the symptoms below, you should be **seen urgently by a doctor**. Ring your GP practice or call NHS 111, NHS Direct Wales or NHS 24.



**Severe headache**



**Very cold skin**



**Trouble breathing**



**Feeling confused**



**Chest pain**



**Problems swallowing**



**Coughing blood**



**Feeling a lot worse**

### 4. WHERE TO GET HELP

**NHS ENGLAND**

CALL  
**111**  
when it's less  
urgent than 999

**NHS DIRECT WALES**

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

**NHS SCOTLAND**

**NHS**  
**24**  
CALL 111

**NORTHERN IRELAND**  
Contact your GP Practice

**HSC** Public Health  
Agency  
Project supported by the PHA

If you have an **EMERGENCY**, call 999 immediately.