



MCC Health Ministry Newsletter November 2009 Edition

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When do I call the doctor with flu or cold symptoms?

If you already have flu or cold symptoms, it's important to call your doctor if you also have any of the following severe symptoms:

- **Persistent fever:** This can be a sign of another bacterial infection that should be treated.
- **Painful swallowing:** Although a sore throat from a cold or flu can cause mild discomfort, severe pain could mean [strep throat](#), which requires treatment by a doctor.
- **Persistent coughing:** When a cough doesn't go away after two or three weeks, it could be bronchitis, which may need an antibiotic. Postnasal drip or sinusitis can also result in a persistent cough. In addition, asthma is another cause of persistent coughing. [Asthma medications](#) such as steroids, anti-inflammatory medications, and [bronchodilators](#) are necessary to treat asthma.
- **Persistent congestion and headaches:** When colds and [allergies cause](#) congestion and blockage of sinus passages, they can lead to sinus infection. If you have pain around the eyes and face with thick nasal discharge after a week, you may have a bacterial infection and need an antibiotic.

In some cases, you may need to get emergency medical attention right away. In adults, signs of a crisis include:

- Severe chest pain
- Severe headache
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Persistent vomiting

In children, signs of an emergency are:

- Difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Lethargy and failure to interact normally
- Extreme irritability or distress
- Symptoms that were improving and then suddenly worsen
- Fever with a rash

Can I prevent flu or cold symptoms?

The most important prevention measure for preventing colds, seasonal flu, and swine flu is frequent hand washing. Hand washing by rubbing the hands with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds helps to slough germs off the [skin](#).

In addition to hand washing to prevent flu or cold symptoms, you can also get a flu shot to prevent seasonal influenza. Seasonal flu activity in the United States generally peaks between late December and early March, so the CDC recommends getting a flu shot in October or November. Within two weeks of getting a flu shot, antibodies develop in your body and provide protection against flu symptoms.

If you do get flu symptoms, call your doctor. If there's some chance that you may have been exposed to swine flu, your doctor may want to take samples and send them away for testing. Whether you have seasonal flu or swine flu, taking prescription antiviral drugs like Tamiflu and Relenza could help. So long as they're used within the first 48 hours of flu symptoms, the medications may help shorten recovery time. Antivirals may also help prevent seasonal or swine flu if you have been exposed to someone with flu symptoms.

Cinnamon Cures – *This everyday spice can nourish your skin, boost your memory, and keep the pounds away! (Health Magazine, October 2009)*

Memory Keeper – Cinnamon gum gives you more than fresh breath; in a Wheeling Jesuit study, people who chewed the gum did better on memory tests than those who chomped on other flavors or didn't chew gum at all.

Throat soother – Calm a scratchy cough with a cinnamon-infused drink: Soak cinnamon sticks in cold water for several hours, then sip. This beverage contains mucilage, a water-soluble fiber that coats and soothes the throat, says Lillian M. Beard, MD, author of *Salt in Your Sock and Other Tried-and-True Home Remedies*.

Skinny Snack – Trying to lose some weight? Use cinnamon. The spice regulates swings in blood sugar, cutting hunger spikes, according to research from the US Department of Agriculture. For a low-cal treat, sprinkle some cinnamon on slices of baked apple. (Studies show that people who eat apples consume fewer calories and have less abdominal fat.)

Feet Treat – Antioxidant-rich cinnamon softens rough, tired skin. Try this pampering foot bath from Elizabeth TenHouten, author of *Cooking Well: Beautiful Skin*: Mix the juice of 5 lemons, 1 tablespoon olive oil, ¼ cup whole milk, ½ cup water, and 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon; soak your feet in the mixture for 15 minutes.

Pumpkin Pie Mousse Dip – *low-cal alternative to calorie-laden desserts during Thanksgiving and also a nice fall appetizer. (Pampered Chef Recipe)*

- 1 (15-oz) can pumpkin
- 2 Cups thawed Cool Whip (can also use light or fat-free version)
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 2 (1-oz) packages cheesecake instant pudding and pie filling

Serve with graham cracker sticks, spiced wafers, gingersnap cookies, or apple wedges. You could also use this as a pie filling or make tarts using refrigerated pie dough in a mini-tart pan and fill each tart with dip.

Please feel free to contact me with any health related questions or concerns. I have a number of resources that I can direct you to. I can also make hospital or home visits and act as a liaison with your physician. You can contact me via my email address, which is knshaffer50@gmail.com, or leave a message at the church office and I will return your call as soon as possible.

Have a blessed day! Karen Shaffer, MCC Parish Nurse

Next Month: Part 3 of the Flu/Cold Series