

myalgias, but this feature usually is not as prominent as it is in influenza. Epistaxis is common with frequent nose blowing.

On physical examination, findings vary, but patients may have conjunctivitis, pharyngeal erythema, pharyngeal exudates, or pharyngeal cobblestoning. Depending on the phase of illness, the nasal mucosa may be pale, boggy, or red and swollen. Nasal mucus can range from watery to purulent. On auscultation, the lungs may be clear, or the patient may have diffuse wheezing or bronchial breath sounds consistent with a viral infection. Symptoms usually last 5–10 days but often last up to 14 days.

TREATMENT

Nonspecific Upper Respiratory Infection

For adults and older children, treatment of nonspecific URI is symptom-based. Fever, myalgias, and sore throat can be treated with acetaminophen or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ibuprofen. Rhinorrhea can be treated with ipratropium bromide. Nasal congestion can be managed with nasal decongestants such as oxymetazoline (two sprays into each nostril twice a day for up to 5 days) or systemic decongestants such as pseudoephedrine. Products that combine a decongestant with analgesics, antihistamines, or both help relieve symptoms. Although supporting data are weak, cough may be relieved with dextromethorphan or benzonatate (Tessalon Perles). Opioids, while effective at relieving cough, are associated with somnolence, dysphoria, constipation, and addiction.

For children <6 years old, cough and cold medicines should not be prescribed, recommended, or used because of the risks of adverse effects. Honey can help soothe a sore throat for children >1 year old. Cool-mist humidifiers may help with breathing, and saline nasal drops and bulb suctioning can help with nasal congestion.

Patients need to be informed that symptoms generally peak early but can last for up to 14 days; that they are infectious as long as they have symptoms; and that they should rest and drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. Red flags for which patients should seek care include a fever of >102°F, chest pain (other than from a