Talking to Your Doctor About Viral Upper Respiratory Infections (Colds and Influenza)

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En Español (Spanish Version)

You have a unique medical history. Therefore, it is essential to talk with your doctor about your personal risk factors and/or experience with viral upper respiratory infections (colds and influenza). By talking openly and regularly with your doctor, you can take an active role in your care.

General Tips for Gathering Information

Here are some tips that will make it easier for you to talk to your doctor:

- Bring someone else with you. It helps to have another person hear what is said and think of questions to ask.
- Write out your questions ahead of time, so you don't forget them.
- Write down the answers you get, and make sure you understand what you are hearing. Ask for clarification, if necessary.
- Don't be afraid to ask your questions or ask where you can find more information about what you are discussing. You have a right to know.

Specific Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider

About Viruses

- Is there any chance this is more serious than a common cold (or a self-limited flu)?

About Your Risk of Developing Complications

- Do I have any medical conditions that might worsen because of this virus?
- What can I do to prevent complications?

About Treatment and Prevention Options

- What treatments do you recommend?
- Do I need anything besides rest, good nutrition, humidified air, over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, and maybe a warm bath?
- Do you have a favorite remedy, like honey and vinegar or herbs like Echinacea?
- Should I get the flu shot each year?
- Is there anyone around me who might need special protection because of my virus?
- Should I, or anyone I live with, take preventive doses of medication (medicine to prevent the flu)?

About Your Outlook

- Should I call if I am not getting better in 10 days or if I’m getting worse at anytime?
- What other symptoms should I be on the lookout for?

REFERENCES:
