



# Cough

- A cough is most often caused by viruses in adults.
- Coughs may be present with other symptoms of a respiratory tract infection (Common Cold) such as fever, sore throat, and nasal congestion.
- Coughs due to a virus are self-limited with symptoms usually lasting 7-14 days.
- Some coughs may last 3-4 weeks.
- Self-limited infections can be treated without seeing a medical provider.

## **SYMPTOMS:**

- Cough that may produce mucus (mucus may be clear, white, yellowish-gray or green)
- Other symptoms of the Common Cold (including nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat)
- Fatigue

## **SELF-CARE MEASURES:**

- Rest
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids
- Avoid cigarette smoke
- Use a humidifier
- Use over-the-counter cough medication containing Dextromethorphan and/or Guaifenesin
  - NOTE: Over-the-counter cough medication is helpful for about 60% of people depending on the reason for the cough. Prescription cough medication only helps 65-70% of people with a cough.
- Use self-care guidelines for symptoms of Upper Respiratory Tract Infection as needed

## **LIMIT SPREAD TO OTHERS:**

- Cover your cough using the crook of your elbow
- Wash your hands frequently
- Avoid intimate contact
- If you have a fever stay home and away from others until fever-free for more than 24 hours (temperature should be less than 100 degrees Fahrenheit without medication)

## **WHEN TO SEEK CARE FROM A MEDICAL PROVIDER:**

- Cough lasts more than three weeks
- Cough prevents you from sleeping
- Chest pain
- Cough produces blood (more than streaks in the mucus)
- For wheezing or shortness of breath
- Fever (greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit) with significant cough for over 72 hours