

Prevention & Treatment of the Common Cold

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Athletes push their bodies to their limits in order to prepare for world class performances. With everyday stresses, both physical and mental, the challenge to stay healthy during cold and flu season is vital for consistent training.

The information in this performance point has been provided by Dr. Janet McKeown MD, CCFP, Diploma in Sports Medicine. Dr. McKeown has worked with many world class athletes to ensure optimal competition preparation. This performance point provides simple, yet effective, methods to avoid missed training days due to the common cold.

Common Cold symptoms include any of the following

- Fever (lasting the first 1-2 days)
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Nasal congestion and sneezing
- Cough

Prevention

- Hand washing before eating and drinking
- Avoid sharing towels, water bottles, cups etc.
- Keep your distance from people who appear to have a cold or are coughing. The same goes for you when you have a cold
- Use a saline nasal spray when travelling by air.
- Room sharing may need to be modified if one roommate is ill
- Vitamin C (250 mg) daily can decrease your risk of getting a cold by up to 50%

Treatment

If you have cold symptoms the following medications can be taken to help relieve the symptoms you have:

For Fever and Muscle Aches

- Advil (600 mg every 6-8 hrs, as needed with food) OR
- Tylenol (1000 mg every 4-6 hours, not to exceed 4000 mg/day)

For Nose and Sinus Congestion

- Tylenol Sinus - two tablets every 6-8 hours if needed
- Cold medications with the active ingredients: pseudoephedrine, phenylephrine, chlorpheniramine, diphenhydramine, DM or guaifenesin are NOT on the 2009 WADA banned substance list (This MAY change for the 2010 banned substance list)

For Cough

- Robitussin Cough Gels - two capsules every 6-8 hours if needed
- Cough medications with the active ingredients: DM and Guaifenesin are NOT banned
- Honey has also been shown to be an effective cough suppressant

For Sore Throat

- Herbon's Zinc Lozenges (or) Jamieson Zinc Lozenges with Vitamin C (or) Cepacol Lozenges

You should follow up with a physician if the following symptoms are present

- Fever above 40°C
- Fever lasting more than three days
- Fever with a rash
- Only symptoms are sore throat, fever and aches (this may be strep throat or mono)
- Fever following recent overseas travel
- Fever that starts or returns more than seven days after cold symptoms begin (this may be bronchitis, pneumonia or sinusitis)
- Cold symptoms lasting more than 10 days
- Chest wheezing
- Sudden onset of headache, fever and aches

Exercise is not recommended if you have a fever. It is OK to exercise if you have a cold with no fever.

¹ NOTE: Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) advisory, "Canadian athletes are strongly advised to be extremely cautious when considering the use of any supplement product, since at present, it is impossible for any organization to guarantee that supplements, including vitamins and minerals, ergogenic aids, and herbal remedies, are free from prohibited substances".

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