

'Tis The Flu and Cold Season

Prevention, Medication Key To Minimizing Misery

(NAPSA)—'Tis the season of giving—and unfortunately that extends to flu and colds.

Fortunately, you can minimize your chances of catching either bug, and your pharmacy has relief if your preventive efforts fail.

“Both flu and colds are viruses, and they can spread quickly and easily from person to person,” said Rite Aid Pharmacist Sarah Matunis, R.Ph. “A flu shot is available to help you avoid contracting this virus. Unfortunately, no such shot exists for cold viruses because there are too many varieties to handle with one shot.”

To minimize your exposure to both illnesses, Matunis suggests avoiding prolonged contact with infected people, washing your hands frequently and not rubbing your eyes and nose. A cold virus can survive up to three hours on objects like doorknobs and table-tops that an infected person has touched.

If, in spite of your best efforts, you still come down with a cold or flu, you can wage a pretty successful battle against the symptoms.

“When selecting an over-the-counter treatment, the key is to first read the label to see if there would be any adverse interactions with medication you’re already taking or conditions you may have,” said Matunis. “The next step is to make sure you’re selecting medicine that treats only the symptoms that you have. You don’t want to use a product that treats a sore throat, congestion and fever if you only have a sore throat.”

Matunis suggests the following guidelines in determining what treatments to use:

- **Fever**—Analgesics like Tylenol® (acetaminophen), Motrin (ibuprofen) and aspirin (never give aspirin to children).
- **Sore throat**—Gargles or local anesthetic sprays. Some analgesics also could help.
- **Nasal congestion**—Decongestants. A vaporizer or saline nasal



If you have only one symptom take a medication that treats just that symptom, say pharmacists.

spray can help soothe nasal passages. Drinking lots of fluids can help break up congestion.

- **Cough**—Suppressants for dry, hacking coughs; expectorants for congested, wet coughs.

- **Muscle aches and headaches**—Analgesics.

Several prescription drugs can help shorten the length of a flu bout but only if taken within a day or two of the first appearance of the symptoms. Zinc, echinacea and vitamin C are touted to help prevent and/or shorten colds, but there are conflicting studies about their effectiveness.

“When in doubt, turn to your pharmacist for help in deciding which products you should use,” said Matunis, explaining that Rite Aid’s pharmacists receive ongoing training to help them stay up-to-date on the latest products. “Your pharmacist can review these products for drug interactions and instruct you on the proper dosage, both of which are especially important for seniors and children. Contact your family doctor if symptoms persist or become severe.”

For more information on colds and flu, see your specially trained Rite Aid pharmacist or go to www.riteaid.com to “Ask the Pharmacist.”