Treating the Common Cold

Information for patients with pulmonary hypertension and their families

What is a cold?
The common cold is a virus and does not go away when you take antibiotics. Symptoms may include cough, runny nose, sneezing and sore throat.

How long does it last?
A cold usually lasts about 8 to 14 days.

How does the cold spread?
A cold can spread easily from person to person. When you cough and sneeze, germs travel in the air and can be breathed in by another person. Colds can also spread by hand to hand or hand to object contact.

How can I prevent a cold?
The flu shot does NOT prevent the cold virus. The best way to avoid colds is to wash your hands often. The cold virus stays “alive” on surfaces for up to 18 hours, so clean areas that you use the most, such as door handles and counter-tops.

Remember, cover your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze.

turn page over >
Should I keep exercising?
Yes, unless it makes you cough more.

What can I take to treat my cold?

You can:

- Take a decongestant for stuffy nose as long as it does not have a stimulant, such as Pseudephedrine.)
- Ask your pharmacist about taking DM cough syrup without a stimulant.
- Drink hot water with lemon and honey.
- Do not have more than your fluid-intake maximum, if you have one.
  Ask a member of your health care team about this.
- Rest and get some sleep.

What is the difference between a cold and flu?
Influenza (commonly call the flu) is a viral respiratory illness. It is more serious than the common cold. Symptoms usually include a fever, chills, cough, malaise and feeling very tired.

For patients with pulmonary hypertension, the Pulmonary Hypertension Program recommends:

- all patients and their families get the FLU shot every year
- all patients get a pneumonia shot every 5 years.