

# Common Cold

*(Rhinitis)*

## Information Sheet

### What is a Common Cold?

A common cold is a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract. The symptoms are cough, runny nose, sneezing, headache and low-grade fever. Colds occur throughout the year but peak months are in spring and autumn. It is not uncommon to have one to six colds a year, especially for young children until they build up immunity. The cold usually lasts about 2 – 7 days but can persist for 10 – 14 days. The incubation period is 1 – 3 days, but can be up to 14 days.

### How is it spread?

The virus is carried in the saliva and nasal secretions. It can be spread easily from person to person through the air by sneezing and coughing or by direct or indirect contact with secretions. The virus can live on objects for hours.

### What to do?

- Wash hands frequently
- Dispose of used tissues properly
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing, and wash hands afterwards
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids
- Limit contact with others, especially those with a weak immune system
- Ensure good ventilation
- Contact your doctor if you have these symptoms:
  - Skin rash
  - Rapid or difficult breathing
  - Earache
  - Persistent cough
  - Fever higher than 39°C (102°F)
  - Excessive sleepiness