

## The Second (March) Sky Valley Medical Report

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Since I write this report a little at a time, the contents of this report will change in order of subjects, but I will still try to report something on 5 different subjects each time or during the month: medical politics, a general topic, information on new treatments or medications, and wellness/health issues.

### 1. COLD REMEDIES

The drug companies would have you believe that if they put all the ingredients for a cold into one pill or syrup, it is convenient and cheaper. Most of the time when you buy a BRAND NAME off the shelf, you are wasting money. Many people don't even look at what ingredients are in the cold medicine. Generic brands are a lot cheaper and just the same. Purchase just what you need based on your symptoms.

Let's look at a typical cold remedy.

- A. It has an ANTIHISTAMINE (this dries the nose and sinuses out, not to mention your mouth, and does not need to be taken unless you really have a very runny nose. You want the mucus to come out, and if you dry it up, it will thicken, and may clog a sinus opening. Antihistamines like chlortrimeton, Allegra, Dimetapp, etc. are mainly for allergy, sneezing, and a runny nose. Most will make you drowsy and make it tougher to empty your bladder.
- B. It has a DECONGESTANT like Sudafed (now you have to get it from the pharmacist because people use it to make BAD

DRUGS like crystal meth) or phentolamine. Most decongestants have adrenaline-like drugs in it. It is a good medicine to take if your nose and sinuses are stopped up. But, it has side effects like any adrenaline- like medicine would, and it will raise your heart rate, blood pressure, make you nervous, keep you awake at night. Don't take it if you have heart or high blood pressure trouble without checking with your doctor and or pharmacist.

Phenylpropanolamine, a decongestant, was taken off the shelf in the USA because it caused all of the above, but also causes hemorrhagic strokes. It is still OTC (over the counter) in many other countries. It is by prescription only in America. Before, it was in many of the cold remedies like Alka-Selzer Plus.

C. MUCUS- SPLITTING AGENTS like guaifenesin ( i.e. Mucinex). It is a great medicine to take if you are congested in your head or chest. This mucolytic agent can be taken by itself or with a decongestant and is a good combination for the simple cold.

D. COUGH SUPPRESSANTS—this medicine is non-narcotic (i.e. dextromethorphan) and will help stop coughing, so you don't need it unless you are coughing a lot. If the label says "DM", it has a cough suppressant. Suppressing your cough might tend to decrease the mucus from coming up. If you do, it may lead to sinusitis or pneumonia.

If you have a dry hacky cough, you may need a prescription for a narcotic syrup (i.e. hycodan), which really works. However, it is a narcotic and therefore addictive.

E. OK, so we have listed the usual suspects for a cold remedy. What about DECONGESTANT NOSE SPRAYS???? BEWARE, your nose will get addicted to it very quickly (i.e. Neosynephrine, Afrin). If you are going to use it, DO NOT use it for more than a few days and only every 12 hours. As an ENT surgeon, I saw huge numbers of patients hooked on nose sprays, because the nose rebounds when the medicine wears off and you grab that spray again and again to get relief). You know how miserable you are when your nose is stopped up!! Use saline solution instead, or at least use it in addition to Afrin. Also, if you use a nose spray, be sure it is long acting, like Afrin. Neosynephrine comes in short and long acting forms.

F. A PAIN MEDICINE for god's sake!! That is thrown in because all the pain med pharmaceutical companies have a cold remedy like Advil cold, etc. Take it separate if you need relief.

G. The tip of the decade!!! SALT WATER SNIFFS!!! This is the best thing to do with any upper respiratory illness: 1 tsp. of salt in 8 oz. of warm water. Lean over the sink, holding one nostril shut, and snort your cupped handful of water forcefully up one nostril each side 3-4 times a day. As the water gets to the back of your throat, stay leaned over and let it come out of your mouth. At first, you may gag, but you will be able to control it soon. This will cleanse your nose, and since the water is forcefully snorted, you will siphon your sinuses. You will be surprised at how much this helps. Half the sore throats will be helped with salt water sniffs because part of your throat that is sore is in the back of your nose. Neti

Pots are fine, but there was just a study out recently that proved bacteria and mold love to live in them. Clean them each time you use them. You can get these ancient pots at any pharmacy.

H. What about HUMIDIFIERS/VAPORIZERS? They work great in dry cold environments like Sky Valley in the winter. Humidifiers put out cold and vaporizers put out warm moist air. I prefer humidifiers. Either are nice because if you are not breathing through your nose and having to breathe through your mouth, the added moisture will help. A lot of sore throats just come from sinus drainage and mouth breathing. This is something to consider especially if your chest is congested. Remember, if you hydrate the mucus, it comes out better. Do not forget to clean your humidifier or vaporizer daily because it will become a trap for bugs and mold too.

I. Speaking of HYDRATION, the number one remedy besides salt water sniffs, is INCREASED WATER INTAKE. Remember, this helps from the inside to thin the mucus and promotes drainage. If your urine color is deep yellow, you are dehydrated. Drink water until your urine color is very light. It is a good way to monitor your hydration level anytime.

J. So, realize taking all these combo OTC meds should be taken cautiously. Be sure you read the ingredients and take it only if you have the symptoms that match the drug. Talk to your pharmacist about it. Take the time!

K. Finally, when does a cold become a BACTERIAL INFECTION? A lot of colds will start with clear mucus and progress to thick white and eventually yellow, frequently with blood in it. If your teeth

start hurting, you might be getting a maxillary sinus infection (cheek). If the cold is getting better, it usually starts in your head and moves to your chest, and then you get well. If, however, the sinus or chest congestion persists with increasing yellow mucus and you are not getting better after a week, go see your doctor to consider antibiotics. Starting the antibiotics earlier will do no good. THERE IS A LOT OF ABUSE OF ANTIBIOTICS FOR VIRAL COLDS. There are even studies out there that say antibiotics do not need to be taken for a sinus infection. Leave that discussion to your doctor. Overuse of antibiotics leads to resistant infections. MRSA (Methacillin resistant Staph Aureus) is an infection now mostly in hospitals that started because too many people were taking antibiotics and created resistance in staph infections.

L. Blowing your nose is ok but not hard!! You might create a nose bleed and force mucus deep into your sinuses, which could create trouble. Sniff salt water instead!

AS ALWAYS, READ UP ON THIS AND TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR/PHARMACIST. These are just guidelines!

2. TAMIFLU—is an anti-viral agent for reducing the symptoms of influenza A and B. It requires a prescription and has been recommended since it came out. I researched some of the sites on the internet, and it is still recommended. However, just last week a good study came out saying it is no better than a placebo. It certainly is no substitute for the flu vaccine. Realize even if you took the flu shot, there are other viruses that can cause flu-like symptoms. The CDC decides each year what the most likely

viruses will cause the majority of flu and then create the vaccine for the coming year. Most of the time, they are correct. But, if you get the flu—stuffy nose, fever, body aches, lethargy and malaise (feeling very tired), dry cough, and headache, consult your doctor.

B. The latest studies show that Tamiflu is no better than a placebo. The early studies by Roche Pharmaceuticals were flawed. That is the risk we take when the company that makes the drug, does the study or pays for it. In MedPage, the Cochran studies in the UK did a re-evaluation of those original studies. They were supported by the UK National Institute of Health and their findings were published in the British Medical Journal. Roche made 3.4 billion dollars on Tamiflu in 2009. Obviously there is now controversy about its effectiveness. Ask your doctor!!

NOTE! With watchdog researchers reviewing these and other findings from research, this creates uncertainty. Findings must be reproduced by other independent laboratories before you can assume what you are reading is true. It is estimated by the NIH (National Institutes of Health) that as much as 10% of research is flawed or the findings were manipulated. Dishonesty in research is a new low!! Greed has created monsters everywhere. That is why I am writing this report, so that you will be empowered to take charge of your own health and question everything that is recommended by your healthcare provider. With less money for each patient visit, physicians are being strained to the maximum, and won't have time to spend with you unless you insist on it. TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR OWN BODY. HELP THE PHYSICIAN TO TAKE CARE OF YOU!

### 3. ALERT-YOUR CAR COULD KILL YOU!

The National Ecology Center recently released its consumer guide to toxic chemicals in cars at [HealthyStuff.com](http://HealthyStuff.com) after testing more than 200 of the most popular 2011-2012 models. Vehicle interiors contain a cocktail of toxic chemicals. THESE CHEMICALS ARE NOT REGULATED, and therefore YOU have no way of knowing about these dangers we face. The chemicals of primary concern are BROMINE in flame retardants, CHLORINE in polyvinyl chloride(PVC), LEAD, and HEAVY METALS. These have been linked to allergies, birth defects, impaired learning, liver damage, and cancer. When you let your auto sit in the sun getting up to 192 degrees, that increases the fumes coming out of the dash and upholstery. When you see the fog on the inside of the window...you are looking at the chemical vapors you will breathe when you get into that hot car. The good news is that some of the auto companies are improving the amount in the interiors. Some of the Hondas, Toyotas, and Acuras top the list with the best rating. The worst are some of the Mitsubishi's, Chryslers, and Kias. The list is in the website. Don't leave your pets in the car, and open your doors and give your car a minute to aerate before getting in and breathing these toxins.

### 4. Obamacare has started in a big way!!

I want you to know about 2 issues that you are paying for!!

- a. Obama is giving all qualified people free cell phones with minutes. Have you seen the ads on TV? Nice touch, but this is

what is coming with Obamacare, and it is going to raise the price of healthcare instead of lowering it. Like it or not, defend it or not, YOU are paying for it.

- b. There is a new health insurance site: [www.pcip.com](http://www.pcip.com)  
If you develop an illness and don't have insurance, you can go to this Obama site and get very low cost insurance with your newly diagnosed disease (cancer, heart disease, hypertension, kidney failure, etc.), so your illness will be covered, because of Obamacare. Do you have any idea what this is going to cost us?? Check out the site. There are well known insurance companies offering this, like Humana. I try not to be biased, but as a physician, this means people will wait 'til they get sick to get insurance. Talk about abuse!! I am looking into this more, and if I find out some loop holes, I'll let you know.

5. News today from the British Medical Journal---if you take sleeping pills even in modest amounts, you increase your chance of dying!! Here, is the kicker!! People that have insomnia, anxiety and depression, sleep apnea, etc. are at higher risk to die than those that don't take sleeping pills, not because of the pills but because of the diseases they have. The article is a typical study that would need to be verified by multiple studies before you need to NEVER take a sleeping pill.

I hope this information is valuable. Remember, these discussions are reports with only a few suggestions. Continue to research your illnesses and the medications you take. You are part of the healthcare team. Never before has then been true. As the face of

healthcare changes, know you are settling for less not more!! It is  
a shame it costs so much!!

Here is to your health!

Dr. Sam