Managing your infection

A step-by-step guide on how to manage your infection

Self-care steps

Step 1: How to help make yourself better
Step 2: Check how long your symptoms last
Step 3: Look out for serious symptoms
Step 4: Where to get help

Developed with:

TARGET
www.rcgp.org.uk/targetantibiotics

Endorsed by:

Professionals, including nurses, and service users were involved in the development of the leaflet.
Step 1: How to help make yourself better

Whatever your infection, you can do the following to help.

- Take paracetamol to reduce a fever; always follow the instructions.
- Ask your pharmacist for advice on reducing your symptoms.
- Get plenty of rest until you feel better.
- Drink enough fluids to avoid feeling thirsty.
- Use tissues when you sneeze to help stop infections spreading.
- Wash your hands to help stop infections spreading.

For more information, visit the NHS Choices website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).
Most common infections get better without antibiotics. Find out how you can make better use of antibiotics by visiting: [www.antibioticguardian.com](http://www.antibioticguardian.com).
Step 2: Check how long your symptoms last

**Earache**
- Most get better by 8 days

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**Sore throat**
- Most get better by 7-8 days

**A cold**
- Most get better by 14 days

**A cough**
- Most get better by 21 days

If you are not starting to improve a little by the times given above, seek advice from your GP practice. If you are feeling a lot worse, phone **NHS 111**, **NHS Direct Wales** or **NHS 24** (see step 4).
Step 3: Look out for serious symptoms

If you have an infection and develop any of the symptoms below, you should be seen urgently by a doctor. Ring your GP practice or call NHS 111, NHS Direct Wales or NHS 24.

- Severe headache
- Very cold skin
- Trouble breathing
- Feeling confused
- Chest pain
- Problems swallowing
- Coughing blood
- Feeling a lot worse

Step 4: Where to get help

NHS England
CALL 111
when it’s less urgent than 999

NHS Direct Wales
NHS Direct Wales
0845 46 47
Galw ECHYD Cymru

NHSScotland
NHS 24
Call us free on 111

N.Ireland
Contact your GP practice

Emergency
If you have an emergency, call 999 immediately.