

Fall / Winter 2003

Colds

By Dr. Craig M. Wax

A "cold" in modern usage usually refers to an upper respiratory infection. This is primarily caused by a virus, such as rinovirus, adenovirus, etc. It is a virus that affects the nose, throat, ears, sinuses and upper airways. Symptoms may include sore throat, ear pain, ear popping, sneezing, itchy eyes, runny nose, headache and cough. Significant fever over 100 F is usually not present, hence the name "cold."

The illness is usually self-limited, or simply runs its course in 2 to 7 days. It doesn't require antibiotics because they are not effective against the viruses that cause colds. It is a good idea though to drink plenty of water and get plenty of rest to help your body's immune system win the battle quickly.

Although no currently known medicine can cure the common cold, people use different remedies to help with the problem. Symptom control is important to most people. They conventionally use over the counter cough syrup, decongestants, analgesics and even anti-histamines to reduce the symptom severity. Others prefer to use vitamin C, echinacea, and zinc lozenges. Although any of these remedies may or may not help, it is your body's immune system that is responsible for ultimately curing the cold.

Arthritis

By Dr. Craig M. Wax

Joint pain and stiffness can be the result of arthritis. There are two fundamental types of arthritis, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Although both may produce similar symptoms, they are different in their cause and treatment.

Osteoarthritis is "wear and tear" disease of the joints. As we age, our joint tissues become less flexible and the joint fluid decreases. The cartilage cushions in our joints can wear out. All these factors contribute to osteoarthritis. The changes can take place in any joints, such as knees, hips, back, neck, etc.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease. This refers to the fact that, in some individuals, the immune system antibodies can attack joint tissues. This can make the surfaces less smooth

and even ragged. In some severe cases, it can destroy the joints and make them unusable.

To differentiate between these and other arthritic conditions, physicians begin with a detailed history. Certain answers to questions can give physicians clues to the diagnosis. Physical exam findings also may suggest a diagnosis. Blood tests and imaging studies (x-ray, CT, MRI) may be used to confirm the diagnosis.

Certain supplements are reported to improve arthritic conditions. Glucosamine and chondroitin are constituents of healthy joints and are available in capsule form. Antioxidants such as vitamin C and vitamin E are also helpful to prevent further tissue damage. Prescription and over the counter medications such as ibuprofen, naproxen and acetaminophen can minimize the pain associated with arthritis.

Exercise is a critical factor in preventing and even treating various forms of arthritis. A daily stretching and flexibility program keeps the muscles and joints more flexible. Cardiovascular exercise can increase healthy fluid flow to and from joints and other tissues. **Prevention and proper treatment will help ensure worry free body performance.**

Diabetes

Ranked as our nation's seventh leading cause of death, diabetes afflicts approximately 15.6 million Americans. It can, if left untreated, lead to kidney failure, gangrene and amputation, stroke and many other serious health problems. Although there are several forms of diabetes, Type I and Type II diabetes are the most common in the United States.

"While many Americans are affected by diabetes, only 35 percent of them know they have it," explains Craig M. Wax, D.O., an osteopathic family physician. "This is

unfortunate since screenings are easy to perform and advances in medicine enable us to treat diabetes."

The most common form of diabetes in the United States is Type II diabetes, affecting 14.9 million people. Essentially, Type II diabetes occurs as result of insulin resistance, a condition

in which the body fails to make enough, or to properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that enables glucose to enter and fuel body cells.

The risk of having Type II diabetes increases with age. "If you are 45 or older you should ask your physician if you are at risk for Type II diabetes," suggests Dr. Wax. "There are several indicators we can use to assess your level of risk."

Type II diabetes risk indicators include:

- Family history
- Obesity
- Race
- Age
- Previously identified impaired glucose tolerance
- Hypertension
- High Cholesterol
- History of gestational diabetes
- Giving birth to a baby over nine lbs.

"The sooner we are able to screen for and diagnose the disease, the more damage we can prevent," points our Dr. Wax. Often, people with Type II diabetes who practice healthy eating habits and do sufficient

amounts of physical activity can prevent the need to ever have to rely on insulin injections for survival.

While Type II diabetes accounts for 90-95 percent of all diabetes cases, Type I diabetes is the most common form of diabetes among children, usually diagnosed between the ages of 10 and 12. Also known as insulin-dependent diabetes, it destroys the cells in the pancreas that are responsible for producing the hormone insulin.

While symptoms vary between individuals, common signs and symptoms of Type I diabetes include:

- High levels of sugar in the blood and urine
- Weight loss

- Extreme hunger and thirst
- Weakness and exhaustion
- Irritability and mood swings
- Nausea and vomiting

Insulin infusions are a necessity for Type I diabetics, as well as regular glucose tests which allow individuals to monitor their glucose levels.

"Regular glucose testing, a diet that is low in sugars and fat, and regular exercise is essential for Type I and II diabetics to lead healthy and productive lives," stresses Dr. Wax.

In addition to Types I and II diabetes, gestational diabetes is a form of the disease that occurs during a pregnancy. "Gestational diabetes usually goes away after pregnancy, but leaves women who had it at an increased risk for later developing Type II diabetes," asserts Dr. Wax.

"I examine my patients' complete family medical histories and daily health choices allowing me to familiarize myself with their backgrounds and incorporate dietary and exercise guidelines that will work with their lifestyles," says Dr. Wax referring to how he incorporates the osteopathic philosophy into his practice. "If you're a diabetic, it's crucial that you visit your physician regularly to develop a plan that is right for you."

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53 South Main Street
Mullica Hill, NJ 08062

856-478-4780

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