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GUEST ARTICLE: UNITED CONCORDIA DENTAL

UNITED CONCORDIA[®] DENTAL

Prevent and Treat Winter Colds and Flu

As we head into those chilly winter months, trying to stay healthy and avoid a cold or flu becomes a challenge. In fact, adults get an average of two to three colds every year, and worse, recovery can take anywhere from seven to ten days.

A few other things you can do this season to stay healthy are:

- Wash your hands to reduce germ spread, as well respiratory illnesses by 16%-21%
- Stay home if you feel sick or have symptoms of a cold or flu (sneezing, runny nose, fever, sore throat)
- Eat healthy, reduce stress, and get adequate sleep
- Consider getting a flu vaccine, as the Centers for Disease Control says an annual flu vaccine is the best way for individuals to protect themselves from falling ill with a strain of influenza.¹
- Brush your teeth twice and floss at least once daily to minimize bacteria in your mouth

Could you have a sinus infection?

If you are experiencing a toothache, particularly in the top teeth, you could have a sinus infection. This is when your sinus cavities become inflamed, and swelling in the cheek sinuses can put pressure on nerves of your top back teeth, which are right nearby.²

If you press hard on the tooth that hurts and don't have an immediate pain, or if the tooth is not sensitive to hot or cold, it might not be a dental issue. Other symptoms of sinus infection include:³

- Stuffy or runny nose
- Face pain or pressure
- Cough or congestion
- Bad breath
- Fever

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If you suspect a sinus infection, make an appointment to see your doctor. Treatments can include a course of antibiotics for more serious cases, or decongestants, saline nasal washes and other home remedies for milder cases. And if you believe it's a toothache, see your dentist.

The downside of medications

If you find yourself feeling lousy in spite of taking these precautions, you may turn to an over-the-counter cough or cold medicine. The downside is that most of them, particularly liquid cold medicine and cough syrup/drops, contain sugar in the form of high fructose corn syrup and sucrose, which can harm your teeth and gums. Plus, cold medicine often includes citric acid, which eats away tooth enamel, making it even easier to develop problems like cavities or infections. To reduce this risk, rinse your mouth with water or brush your teeth after taking liquid cold medicine. choose a sugar-free brand, or opt for pill-form medication.

Some medicines also can contain alcohol, which can dry out your mouth. Reduced saliva production increases the risk of cavities and other oral health problems. People often take antihistamines to decrease excess fluid or mucus production typical with a common cold, but this also reduces saliva flow. Some alternative treatments for that stuffy nose, sore throat, or dry mouth are:

- Drink herbal tea or hot water with lemon
- Take a steamy shower or bath
- Try out a Neti pot to irrigate the nasal area

Sources:

1. cdc.gov; 2020-2021 Flu season summary; October 2021.
2. Mayoclinic.org; Sinus infection and toothache: Any connection?; September 2021.10
3. Webmd.com; What is sinusitis?; July 2020.11