

Q+A

I have a condition that needs to be checked out by a specialist, but the doctors I contacted are booked for months. How can I minimize the wait?

Ask your primary care physician to call the specialist on your behalf. "Specialists are more likely to see you earlier if another doctor asks them," says David Rothbart, M.D., a Texas board-certified neurosurgeon. One more option: Appeal to the doctor's office manager for help. Let her know you're worried, and see if she'll squeeze you in. (Remember, 5% of appointments are cancellations or no-shows.) —H.G.W.

GET WELL SOON

Feeling crummy? Get back on your feet fast with these helpful tips from Neil Schachter, M.D., author of *The Good Doctor's Guide to Colds & Flu* (Collins). —Heather Gowen Walsh

cold **Telltale symptoms:** "Neck up" annoyances are what to watch for—like runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes, sore throat and mild fever. Symptoms last about a week.

To feel better fast: Rest, drink fluids and eat chicken soup. Take a painkiller with acetaminophen or ibuprofen. An antihistamine or decongestant will aid breathing.

flu **Telltale symptoms:** From the "neck down" you may get body aches, chills, fatigue, a cough with thick phlegm and a high fever (over 101 degrees) for a week or longer.

To feel better fast: Treat it the same way as a cold but add a cough syrup or suppressant at night to sleep soundly. If there is no relief by day four or if symptoms disappear and then boomerang back it's time to call a doctor.

sinus infection **Telltale symptoms:** When a cold doesn't clear up after a week you may notice a thick, yellow mucus, pressure in your face and bad breath. **To feel better fast:** Drink warm liquids, and buy a saline spray to reduce the swelling in your nasal passages. Also try a humidifier—but rinse it thoroughly with hot water (no soap) twice a week. If a decongestant or antihistamine doesn't help, your doctor may prescribe you an antibiotic.



strep throat **Telltale symptoms:** Two-plus days of a very sore throat, a high fever, swollen lymph glands in the neck and white splotches on your tonsils. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and loss of appetite are also signs. **To feel better fast:** See your doc for antibiotics. Meantime, gargle with salt water, and drink hot tea to loosen dry mucus.



FC tip

NEED A BRAIN BOOST? HERE'S SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT: TRY EATING MORE WHOLE GRAINS. A RECENT STUDY SHOWED THAT PEOPLE WHO GOT 46% OF THEIR CALORIES FROM CARBS FOR EIGHT WEEKS PERFORMED BETTER ON INTELLIGENCE AND REASONING TESTS THAN THOSE WHO ATE ALMOST NO CARBS.

beat the blues

Experts may have found a surprising cause of depression: "People in damp, moldy homes are as much as 40% more likely to be depressed," says Edmond Shenassa, Sc.D., of the Brown University School of Medicine. "Some people who are exposed to fungus can suffer respiratory problems and fatigue, which are linked to depression," says Shenassa. Mold can grow in any humid spot, but you can get rid of it—for good.

- Seal your windows tightly, and drain water away from your home.
 - Run a dehumidifier in the basement.
 - Vent your bathrooms, spray the wall tiles with a mold-killer and replace the tub's curtain liner every few months.
 - Regularly disinfect your garbage can and your refrigerator drip trays with a solution that's 1 cup bleach (or soap) to 1 gallon warm water.
 - Periodically drain your air-conditioning units of standing water.
- H.G.W.



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