



ABCs OF RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

A WHAT IS A RESPIRATORY INFECTION?

A **respiratory infection** interferes with normal breathing. Caused by germs, respiratory infections may involve the “upper airway,” (nose and throat, usually causing a cold and sore throat) and or the “lower airway” (lungs, usually causing more severe conditions such as pneumonia). **Respiratory Infections** may be harmless and short-lived (as in the “common cold”) or they could be related to more chronic, life-long, debilitating conditions (such as severe asthma, bronchitis, and COPD).

Respiratory infections are most dangerous in the older (age 65 onward) age groups; added risk factors include diabetes, certain cancers, chemotherapy, and smoking.

B DO I HAVE A RESPIRATORY INFECTION?

Top 5 signs of a respiratory infection:

- Rapid breathing; difficulty in speaking
- Persistent and/or productive (yellow and/or bloody) cough
- Fever & chills
- Generalized aches & pains
- Chest pains

C WHAT SHOULD I DO?

To prevent a respiratory infection:

- **Get vaccinated!** Measles and pertussis (whooping cough) are not treatable; influenza can be fatal.
- **Practice good hygiene.** Wash your hands frequently; sneeze into a tissue or the arm of your shirt.
- **Eat healthy, exercise, and manage stress.** Take vitamins with vitamin C (to boost your immune system).

When to seek *immediate* medical care:

If a cough is associated with any of the following, call your doctor, 911, or a local emergency phone number:

- Difficulty in breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Persistent or high fever
- Chest pain