How you avoid a cold and worse things!

Tips and guidelines for players and coaches

Typically, upper respiratory tract infections (this includes your airways, lungs, sinuses and ears) are caused by viruses, but sometimes may also be caused by bacteria. These unwanted intruders may be both received by, and passed on from, the same person. This means that you should pay as much attention to routines that prevent the transmission of viruses and bacteria from oneself to others and vice versa.

The golden rule is to practice the same standard of hygiene when in contact with others as you want others to practise towards you.

The following list summarises some preventive measures and practical guidelines on how to protect against infections in general and upper respiratory tract infections like common colds, sore throat, cough, pneumonia and others:

1. Make sure that you are updated on all vaccines needed at home and for travels. If in doubt, ask your doctor or a specialist.
2. Minimise contacts with sick people, animals and objects which might carry disease transmitting viruses or bacteria.
3. Distance yourself from people who are coughing, sneezing or having a “runny nose”.
4. Keyboards, telephones, door handles, faucets can be used by many people and can transfer viruses and bacteria. Shaking hands is a common form of transmission. So, make sure you wash hands regularly, before meals and after contact with materials or people who might potentially be carrying viruses or bacteria.
5. Use disposable paper towels and limit your own hand to mouth/nose contact when suffering from the typical symptoms like a runny nose, sneezing, sore throat and so on.
6. Quickly isolate a team member with these symptoms and move out his/her roommate.
7. Do not use other peoples drinking bottles, cups, silverware, etc.
8. Wear proper outdoor clothing and avoid getting and staying cold and wet after exercise.
9. Protect upper and lower airways from direct exposure to cold and dry air during strenuous exercise, by using a scarf or facial mask etc. at temperatures below -15°C.
11. Practice good recovery routines, including proper nutrition and rehydration. An intense exercise session briefly reduces immune function opening a window for an infection to strengthen. Rest, fluids and food help rapidly return immune function.

Guidelines for exercise during a respiratory tract infection:

First day of illness:

- Reduce or cancel strenuous exercise or competitions when experiencing RTI symptoms like sore throat or coughing, runny or congested nose. Many feel that if symptoms are “above the collar” some light training can be continued.
• Reduce or cancel all exercise when experiencing additional complaints like muscle/joint pain and headache, fever and generalised feeling of malaise. Symptoms like these are “below the collar” and training should be cancelled.

• Drink plenty of fluids, always from a clean cup. Keep from getting wet and cold and minimise life-stress.

• Consider the use of topical, symptomatic therapy with nasal drainage. Consider decongestants and analgesics if you have a fever.

• Report illness to a team physician or health care personnel and keep away from other athletes if you are part of a team training or travelling together.

    **Second day:**

• Don’t train if you have a fever (a temperature above 37.5-38°C) or coughing increases.

• If you have no fever or malaise and no worsening of “above the collar” symptoms, you can perform light exercise (pulse < 120 bpm) for up to 30-45 min. During winter, do this indoors. Best to exercise alone.

    **Third day:**

• If you still have a fever and RTI symptoms, consult your (personal or team) physician.

• If you have no fever or malaise and no worsening of initial symptoms, you can perform moderate exercise (pulse < 150bpm) for up to 45-60 min. During winter, do this indoors. Best to exercise alone.

    **Fourth day:**

• If no relief of symptoms do not try to exercise, but visit your doctor.

• If this is the first day of improved condition, follow the guidelines of “return to exercise” below.
Guidelines for return to exercise after respiratory tract infections:

1. Make sure that you have one full day free from fever and improvement of RTI symptoms before returning to exercise.

2. Observe the body's reaction to your first exercise session before starting on a new session the next day.

3. Stop physical exercise and consult your physician if you experience new episode(s) of fever or worsening of initial symptoms or persistent coughing and exercise-induced breathing problem.

4. Use the same number of days to step up to normal training as you spent off normal training because of the illness.

5. Closely observe your tolerance to increased exercise intensity. Take an extra day off if recovery is not satisfactory.

6. Use proper outdoor clothing and specific cold air protection for your airways when exercising in temperatures below -10°C the first week after RTI.