**WELTON FAMILY HEALTH CENTRE**

**What can I do about?**

 **Colds and Flu**

**Colds and Flu are caused by viruses. There are a large number of different viruses which may cause the symptoms of colds and these are capable of changing rapidly so that it is impossible to produce a treatment to get rid of the disease or to avoid catching them.**

**The viruses may be spread by small droplets produced in coughing and sneezing, or on the fingers.**

**The main symptoms of a cold are:**

1. **Nasal congestion**
2. **Sneezing**
3. **Sore throat**
4. **Headache**
5. **Cough**
6. **A slight temperature**
7. **Aching flu like symptoms**

**If these are the only symptoms you have antibiotics are unlikely to help, and it is safe enough to treat these with over the counter or home remedies initially.**

**Drink plenty of fluids to avoid getting dehydrated. Eat a healthy diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.**

**Take Paracetamol to treat fever or any aching. Ibuprofen may also be used for this.**

**You may use a decongestant to help relieve the symptoms of a blocked nose. Local nasal sprays should not be used for longer than 7 days because of the risk of making the congestion worse.**

**Cough medicines are usually of very limited value in treating a cough.**

**Steam inhalations may also help to relieve the symptoms of a blocked nose. Sit with a bowl of hot water on the table in front of you and a towel over your head and the bowl, and inhale the steam. Adding menthol, camphor or eucalyptus to the water may also help.**

**Gargling with salt water may relieve the symptoms of a sore throat. Sucking menthol sweets may also help.**

**Nasal saline drops may relieve the symptoms of congestion in babies and young children. The drops and sprays may be obtained from the chemist.**

**If you have a chronic medical condition or are on long term medication you may need to check with the pharmacist before using these remedies.**

**Most colds and flu will get better after 7-10days. Arrange to see the GP if:**

1. **You have a long term condition such as heart disease or diabetes and the symptoms are not resolving after a few days.**
2. **You have a very high temperature and abdominal pain or a severe headache.**
3. **If a child is vomiting but does not have diarrhoea, or develops a rash with the fever.**
4. **If a child stops drinking and is lethargic.**
5. **If fever in a child does not respond to Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.**