NOTE: At present, there is no conclusive evidence that large doses of vitamin C can prevent or cure the common cold.

Consult health care personnel:

- if fever is above 101°F (38.3°C) for more than three days.
- if you have chest pain, or shortness of breath.
- if general symptoms last longer than 1-2 weeks or worsen.
- anytime you are unsure of what to do.

Special Instructions:

Visit Student Health online at:
http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth
What Is It?

The common cold is an upper respiratory infection caused by any one of over 200 viruses.

How Do You Catch It?

Cold viruses enter the body through contact with fluid from the eyes, nose or throat of an infected person. Confinement in a small space with many people promotes cold transmission.

What Are the Symptoms?

Symptoms can last for up to 2 weeks and may include:
• Sore throat
• Runny or stuffy nose or sneezing
• Mild headache
• Head congestion
• Fever > 100.4°F
• Cough (may linger 1-2 weeks after first symptoms appear)
• Mild body aches

What Can You Do?

Viruses do not respond to antibiotics, Colds must run their course; there is nothing you can do to stop them. You can, however, take measures to feel better:
• REST to relieve weakness and muscular aches. Avoid becoming fatigued and take 1-2 days off from classes/work if needed.
• DRINK FLUIDS to keep secretions thin and fevers down. Aim for 8-10 glasses per day. If you do not feel like eating, emphasize high-calorie drinks (i.e. soda or juice).
• DON’T SMOKE. It irritates the mucus lining of the nose and throat and can worsen symptoms.

• INCREASE HUMIDITY to reduce nasal stuffiness using a clean humidifier or cool mist vaporizer. If you do not have a humidifier or vaporizer, try sitting in a steamy bathroom with a hot running shower for 15 minutes.
• PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE to prevent spreading your cold. Cover your nose and throat when you sneeze or cough, wash your hands and dispose of used tissues. Avoid sharing towels, drinks and eating utensils.
• MEDICATIONS (non-prescription) can be helpful in relieving discomfort of cold symptoms, but do not shorten the length of the illness.

Advil/Ibuprophene (400mg-600mg) every 6-8 hours on a full stomach, or acetaminophen (650 mg) every 4-6 hours reduces muscular aches, headaches, fevers, and sore throat.

Decongestants (i.e. Sudafed) (oral) relieve stuffiness by promoting nasal drainage. Ask at the Pharmacy for over-the-counter decongestants.

Nasal sprays (i.e. Afrin) provide fast relief from stuffiness but should be used no more than 2-3 days to avoid the “rebound effect” of increased congestion. Saline nasal sprays can help with nasal congestion, as well.

Over the counter cough suppressants have limited efficacy. Remember, coughing is a normal, protective reflex that aids in airway clearance and aids in recovery. If nighttime cough interferes with sleep, diphenhydramine (Benadryl) may be helpful.

Throat lozenges provide temporary relief from sore throats. Look for ingredients that contain phenol or end in “caine”.