

COMMON COLD

Runny nose/stuffy nose/itchy nose

Symptoms

- Runny or congested nose
- The nasal discharge may be clear, cloudy, yellow or green
- Usually associated with fever
- A sore throat often is the first symptom
- Sometimes associated with a cough, hoarse voice, watery eyes, and swollen lymph nodes in the neck

Cause

- Colds are caused by several respiratory viruses.
- **Healthy children average 6 colds a year.** Influenza usually feels like a bad cold with more fever and muscle aches.
- Colds are not serious. Between 5 and 10% of children develop a bacterial complication (ear or sinus infection).

Colds: Normal Viral Symptoms

- Colds cause nasal discharge, nasal congestion, sinus congestion, ear congestion, sore throats, hoarse voice, coughs, croup, and red, watery eyes. When you combine all these symptoms, colds are the most common reason for calls to the doctor.
- Cold symptoms are also the number one reason for doctor visits. Hopefully, this information will save you time and money and help you avoid some unnecessary trips to the doctor. You can be reassured the following are normal cold symptoms and children with these symptoms don't need to be seen:
 - Fever up to 3 days
 - Sore throat up to 5 days (with other cold symptoms)
 - Nasal discharge and congestion up to 2 weeks
 - Coughs up to 3 weeks

Colds: Symptoms of Secondary Bacterial Infections

- Using this topic, you can select out the 5 to 10% of children who have ear infections or sinus infections. Many are identified with specific symptoms and patterns. Some are suspected because symptoms last too long:
 - Earache or ear discharge
 - Sinus pain not relieved by nasal washes
 - Difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
 - Fever present over 3 days
 - Fever that goes away for 24 hours and then returns
 - Sore throat present over 5 days

Nasal discharge present over 2 weeks, Cough present over 3 weeks

Return to School

- Your child can return to day care or school after the fever is gone and your child feels well enough to participate in normal activities. For practical purposes, the spread of colds cannot be prevented.

HOME CARE ADVICE FOR COLDS

- **Reassurance:**

Because there are so many viruses that cause colds, it's normal for healthy children to get at least 6 colds a year. With every new cold, your child's body builds up immunity to that virus.

Most parents know when their child has a cold, often because they have it too or other children in child care or school have it. You don't need to call or see your child's doctor for common colds unless your child develops a possible complication (such as an earache).

The average cold lasts about 2 weeks and we don't have any medicine to make it go away sooner.

However, we have good ways to relieve many of the symptoms. With most colds, the initial symptom is a runny nose, followed in 3 or 4 days by a congested nose. The treatment for each is different.

- **For a Runny Nose With Profuse Discharge: Blow or Suction the Nose**

The nasal mucus and discharge is washing viruses and bacteria out of the nose and sinuses.

Blowing the nose is all that's needed.

For younger children, gently suction the nose with a suction bulb.

Apply petroleum jelly to the nasal openings to protect them from irritation (cleanse the skin first).

- **Nasal Washes To Open a Blocked Nose:**

Use saline nose drops or spray to loosen up the dried mucus. If not available, can use warm tap water.

Frequency: Do nasal washes whenever your child can't breathe through the nose.

Saline nasal sprays can be purchased without a prescription.

For young children, can also use a wet cotton swab to remove sticky mucus.

Importance for a young infant: can't nurse or drink from a bottle unless the nose is open.

- **Fluids:** Encourage your child to drink adequate fluids to prevent dehydration. This will also thin out the nasal secretions and loosen any phlegm in the lungs.
- **Humidifier:** If the air in your home is dry, use a humidifier.

- Treatment for Associated Symptoms of Colds:**
 - Fever* - Use acetaminophen (e.g., Calpol/Crocinl) or ibuprofen for muscle aches, headaches, or fever above 102° F (39° C).
 - Sore Throat* - Use warm soup if over 1 year old and suck on hard candy if over 6 years old.
 - Cough* - Give honey 1/2 to 1 teaspoon (2 to 5 ml) for younger children over 1 year old and use cough drops for children over 6 years old.
 - Red Eyes* - Rinse eyelids frequently with wet cotton balls.
- Contagiousness:** Your child can return to child care or school after the fever is gone and your child feels well enough to participate in normal activities. For practical purposes, the spread of colds cannot be prevented.
- Expected Course:** Fever 2-3 days, nasal discharge 7-14 days, cough 2-3 weeks.
- Call doctor if:**
 - Earache suspected
 - Fever lasts over 3 days
 - Any fever occurs if under 12 weeks old
 - Nasal discharge lasts over 14 days
 - Cough lasts over 3 weeks
 - Your child becomes worse
- Extra Advice - Air Travel With Colds:**
 - It's safe to fly when your child has a cold.
 - He could develop temporary ear congestion or earache, but that's often preventable.
 - It's unusual to develop an ear infection, unless your child already is prone to frequent ear infections. However, that's not a reason to avoid flying.
- Extra Advice - Prevention of Ear Congestion During Air Travel:**
 - Most symptoms occur during descent of the aircraft (the 15 minutes before landing)
 - Stay awake during takeoff and descent
 - Swallow during descent using fluids or a pacifier
 - Children over age 4 can chew gum during descent
 - Yawning during descent also can open the middle ear
 - Stay well hydrated throughout the flight to prevent the nasal secretions from drying out