

Facts about The Common Cold

Colds are caused by viruses. Kids can have as many as 8 or 10 colds each year. A child with a cold may have a high fever and may not feel like eating or playing. More often, children aren't very sick and have only a cough, runny nose and sneezing. Once in a while, a cold can lead to problems such as ear infection or pneumonia.

An antibiotic will not help with a cold. Colds are caused by viruses, not bacteria.

A child with a cold can still play outside.

How Are Colds Spread?

Colds spread easily from person to person.

When a child with a cold coughs or sneezes or spits, the virus can spread up to a metre through the air to other people.

Cold viruses can be in the mucus or saliva and kids can spread by touching each other or by touching objects, such as toys or tables.

Cold viruses can live for hours on objects, such as toys or tables. If kids have virus on their hands and then touch an object, other children can get the virus by touching the same object and putting their hands into their eyes, mouths or noses.

As a cold gets better, it is normal to have a runny nose. At first, the mucus is clear. After a few days, the body's immune cells fight back and the mucus changes to white or yellow or green. This is normal and does not mean that the child is infected with bacteria. A cold usually lasts for 4 to 7 days.

Good hand washing practices are the best way to reduce the spread of cold viruses and are especially important during cold and influenza season.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol™, Tempra™) or ibuprofen (Advil™, Motrin™) may help reduce a fever and provide some comfort. Always follow the directions on the package about how much and how often to take acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

Never give products containing ASA (acetylsalicylic acid, such as Aspirin™) to anyone under the age of 20 years. Use of ASA products by children can lead to Reye's syndrome, a serious condition affecting the brain and liver.



What to Do at Home

- Wash your child's hands and your own hands after you wipe your child's nose. Wash your hands often and always before preparing or eating food.
- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and lots of fluids to drink.
- **Do not give over-the-counter cough and cold medicines to a child under 6 years of age, unless your doctor tells you to.**
- Use saline nose drops (a weak salt water solution) to soften the mucus in the nose and help your child breathe better. Do not use nose drops that contain drugs. Use a bulb syringe to clear mucus from the nose.



When to Call Your Doctor or 811

More serious infections can start out as a cold. Call your doctor, if your child has **any** of these signs:

- earache
- a temperature of 38.5°C or higher or a fever and is less than 6 months of age
- has a fever for more than 72 hours
- rash
- very sleepy, listless or does not respond
- very cranky, fussy or cries more than usual
- fast breathing or has trouble breathing
- a cough that won't go away
- has any other signs of illness that concern you



Children with colds may go to the child care centre or school, if they feel well enough to take part in activities.