

When should I see the Doctor?

CHILDREN See the doctor if your child:

- Is not improving
- Is very irritable, grizzly or sleepy
- Breathes very fast
- Refuses food or drinks
- Has a sore throat
- Has sore ears
- Coughs a lot
- Has a mild fever

ADULTS See the doctor if you:

- Have worsening symptoms
- Are not improving after a few days



See your doctor if you are worried about how sick you or your child are at any time. If you have other medical problems you should see your doctor earlier.

When should I contact the Doctor immediately?

If you or your child develop any of the danger symptoms of Meningitis such as:

- Severe headache or neck pain
- Eyes intolerant to light
- Drowsy, floppy, is less alert or difficult to wake
- Skin rash
- High fever
- Vomiting
- Unusual or high pitched cry

YOU MUST CONTACT A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY

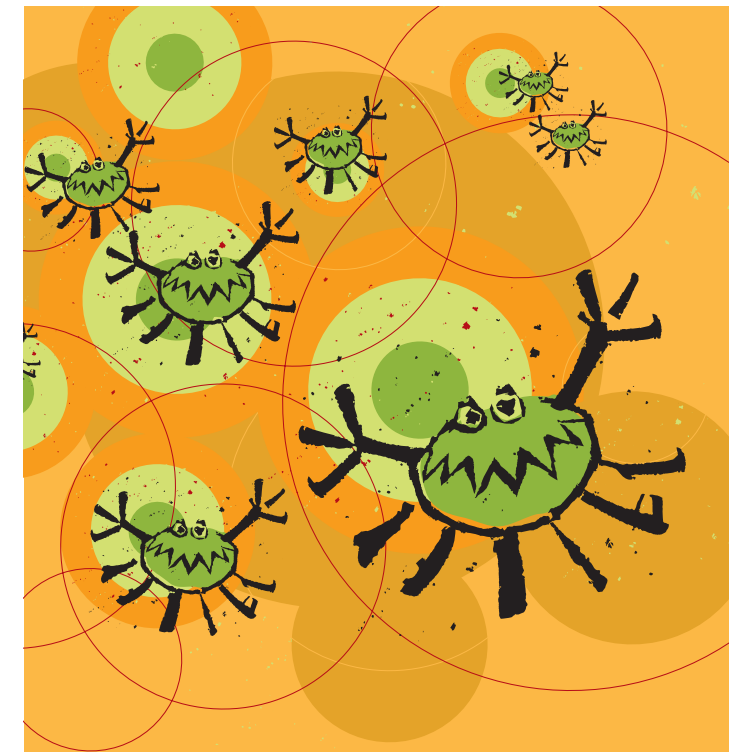
How can I prevent a cold spreading to everyone in the family?

Cold and flu viruses are spread by transferring droplets of fluid from your nose or mouth. You may prevent this by:

- Keeping your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Hand washing with plenty of soap and water.
- Not sharing cups or cutlery.
- Using paper tissues to blow your nose and throwing them away after use. Remember to wash your hands after covering your mouth for a sneeze.
- Making your home a smoke-free zone as smoke can irritate the nose and lungs and may increase a child's susceptibility to a cold.

VACCINES. A vaccine is available to help protect you from influenza (the flu). **It will not stop the common cold.** The flu vaccine is recommended, and is free, for all people 65 years and over, and for people under 65 years with a chronic illness such as asthma, diabetes or kidney problems. Please see your doctor or practice nurse for more information.

SPECIFIC TREATMENT FOR INFLUENZA. Treatments that may shorten the duration of major symptoms of influenza by an average of 1 to 1.5 days are now available at full cost. Together with your doctor you may choose to have one of these medications prescribed. These medicines affect only influenza viruses and not cold viruses or bacteria and must be started within 30 hours of the onset of symptoms for greatest benefit. It is important that if you do take these medicines and your symptoms worsen or do not improve (particularly if you have respiratory problems) you should see your doctor.



about Colds + Flu

- **THIS BROCHURE** offers advice on ways that you may help yourself. It gives you information about your doctor's decision for treatment, explains about antibiotic use & antibiotic resistance.
- **YOUR DOCTOR** is trained to diagnose your illness and to recommend appropriate treatment.
- **CONTACT** your doctor, practice nurse, pharmacist, or other health professional if you have any concerns about your health or your child's health, or for more information on colds and influenza.

Colds, flu and bacterial infections are different illnesses

WHAT IS A COLD?

Most people refer to a cold as “the flu” but **influenza** or the **real flu** is a specific illness, different from a cold.

Like colds, viruses cause the flu. It tends to occur in small outbreaks or epidemics. Up to 15% of people over 20 years old catch the flu each year.

The flu has the following symptoms, which distinguish it from a cold.

- Sudden or rapid onset of symptoms
- High temperature
- Chills and fever
- Headache
- Weakness and aching muscles
- Loss of appetite



Most flu symptoms usually clear in 7 to 10 days. People with the flu are likely to need to take several days off work.

Antibiotics are not useful against viruses. They are only useful against bacteria.

WHAT ARE BACTERIAL INFECTIONS?

Bacterial infections may also cause cold or flu-like symptoms but more often they are responsible for infection in one particular site, such as the ear, tonsils or sinuses.

Your doctor will assess whether the infection you have will benefit from antibiotics.

Some key points your Doctor will consider when assessing your illness

VIRAL INFECTIONS ARE NOT AFFECTED BY

ANTIBIOTICS. Because colds and flu are caused by viruses, they cannot be cured with antibiotics. Your body's own immune system will attack and kill the virus in a few days.

If your doctor assesses your symptoms and believes you have a viral illness you will not be prescribed an antibiotic.

Antibiotics do not stop colds from getting worse.

IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO GET RID OF ALL BACTERIA.

Not all bacteria are harmful. Healthy bodies carry millions of useful bacteria, mainly in our gut where they help digest food. Normally our bodies can control these bacteria.

ANTIBIOTICS MAY BE HARMFUL. Antibiotics are designed to harm bacteria and not us. Sometimes antibiotics kill useful bacteria and cause unwanted effects such as diarrhoea, stomach pains and thrush. Nausea, vomiting and skin rashes may also occur due to antibiotics.

For these reasons your doctor will not wish to give you an antibiotic unless it is considered necessary for your infection.

BACTERIA MAY BECOME 'USED TO' ANTIBIOTICS.

Antibiotics attack bacteria. As part of the bacteria's normal defence against this attack bacteria can become 'used to' or resistant to particular antibiotics. This means that antibiotics may lose their effectiveness and not work very well. Bacterial resistance to antibiotics is increasing. It is important not to overuse antibiotics, especially by using them unnecessarily for viral infections.

So do not expect your doctor to prescribe an antibiotic for every infection. BUT if your doctor does prescribe an antibiotic, it is important to take them all as directed and to finish the entire course.

So what can I do for my cold?

There are no instant cures for viral colds and flu but some of the following suggestions may make you feel more comfortable.

REST. A warm comfortable environment will help your immune system fight off the viruses that cause colds and flu. Take a day or two off work if you need it.

PLENTY OF FLUIDS. Drink plenty of fluid (eg. water, dilute fruit juice) to prevent the membranes in your nose and throat drying out and to replace fluids lost from your body.

REGULAR PARACETAMOL OR ASPIRIN-BASED PRODUCTS. Take every 4 to 6 hours for up to 3 days or as directed to reduce fever and relieve aches and pains. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the most appropriate medicine and dose.

Children should not be given aspirin-based products.

STEAM INHALATIONS. Breathing in steam during a hot shower can help you clear mucus from blocked sinuses, relieve nasal congestion and chest tightness. Alternatively, you can breathe in steam by placing your head over a bowl of hot (but not boiling) water using a towel over your head to trap the steam.

A DECONGESTANT. These may help 'dry' a runny nose or relieve blocked sinuses. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about an appropriate decongestant. Do not use for more than 5 days.

LOZENGES AND GARGLES. Throat lozenges or gargling warm salted water may help to relieve a sore throat.

