

## Do I need to go to the Doctor?

### SEE A DOCTOR IF YOUR CHILD:

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

### SEE A DOCTOR IF YOU:

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

If you are worried about how sick you or your child are at any time don't hesitate to see a doctor. If you have other medical problems you should see a doctor earlier.

### CONTACT THE DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD DEVELOP ANY OF THESE MENINGITIS DANGER SYMPTOMS:

- 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.

## How can I avoid catching bugs?

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

- Wash hands with plenty of soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly
- Keep hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth
- Do not share cups or cutlery
- Use paper tissues to blow your nose and throw them away after use.
- If you use your hands to cover a sneeze, **always** wash them afterwards or cough into your elbow.
- Make your home a smoke-free zone as smoke can irritate the nose and lungs and may increase a child's susceptibility to a cold.

### INFLUENZA VACCINES

A vaccine is available to help protect you from influenza (the flu). It will not stop the common cold. The flu vaccine is free for people over 65, or anyone with a chronic illness such as asthma or diabetes. **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 1-1.5 days are now available at full cost. These medicines affect influenza viruses and not cold viruses or bacteria and must be started within 30 hours of the onset of symptoms for the greatest benefit. If you do take these medicines and your symptoms worsen or do not improve you should see a doctor.



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# THE BUGS ARE CATCHING ON...

## REMEMBER THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



## What's the difference between colds, flu and bacterial infections?

Most people refer to a cold as "the flu" but influenza or the real flu is a specific illness, different from a cold. Viruses cause both colds and the flu. Flu 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. These include:

The 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 flu are likely to need to take several days off work or school.

**Antibiotics are not useful against cold and flu 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 may benefit from antibiotics.**

REMEMBER... ANTIBIOTICS  
DON'T DO COLDS AND FLU!

## What about antibiotics?

### ANTIBIOTICS DO NOT HELP VIRAL INFECTIONS

Colds and flu cannot be cured with antibiotics because they are caused by viruses. 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 he/she will not prescribe you an antibiotic. Antibiotics do not stop colds from getting worse.

### ANTIBIOTICS CAN BE HARMFUL

Antibiotics are designed to harm bacteria and not us. Sometimes antibiotics kill useful or 'good' bacteria and cause unwanted effects such as diarrhoea, stomach pains and thrush. Nausea, vomiting and skin rashes may also occur due to antibiotics. For those 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.**

REMEMBER...  
TAKE THE LOT,  
NO MATTER WHAT!

## What if I catch a bug?

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 or school if you need it.

### FLUIDS

Drink plenty of fluids (eg. water, diluted 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 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 under a towel, over a bowl of hot (but not boiling) water.

### A DECONGESTANT TABLET OR NASAL SPRAY

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

Sucking throat lozenges and gargling warm salted water may help to relieve a sore throat.

IF IN DOUBT CHECK IT OUT!

