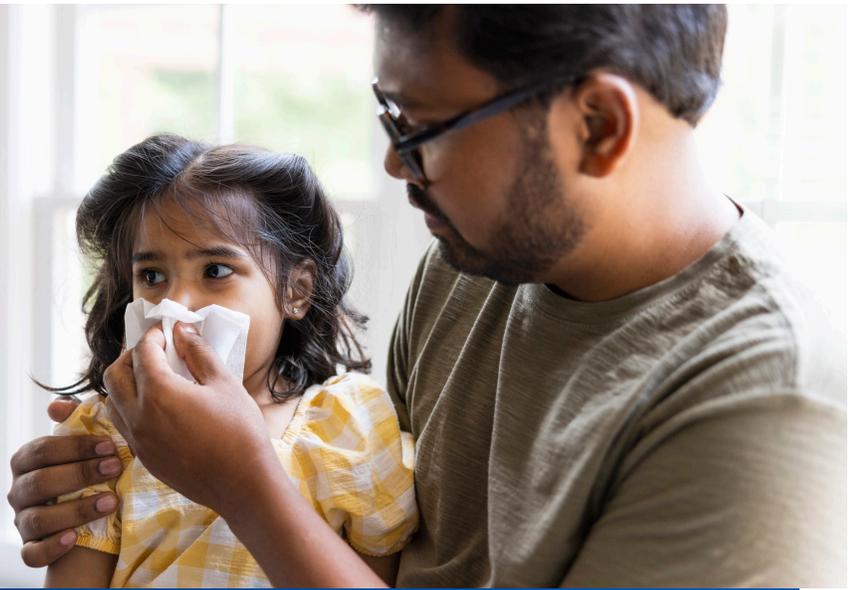


Preventing and Managing the Common Cold



Are you sneezing, or do you have a stuffy and runny nose? You might have a cold. Antibiotics do not work against viruses that cause colds and **will not help you feel better.**

What is Common Cold?

A common cold is a mild upper respiratory illness caused by a virus that resolves in a short period of time.

Symptoms

Symptoms of a cold usually peak within 2 to 3 days, though some (especially runny nose and cough) can last up to 10–14 days. Symptoms can include:

- Sneezing
- Nasal congestion
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Fever (although most people with colds do not have fever)
- Mucus
 - Clear mucus helps wash viruses from the nose and sinuses
 - Mucus may change to a white, yellow, or green color after 2–3 days, this is normal



Colds can have similar symptoms to flu. It can be difficult (or even impossible) to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone.

Causes

More than 200 viruses can cause a cold, but rhinoviruses are the most common type. Viruses that cause colds can spread from person to person through the air and close personal contact.

When to Seek Medical Care*

See a healthcare professional if you have:

- Trouble breathing or fast breathing
- Dehydration
- Fever that lasts longer than 4 days
- Symptoms that last more than 10 days without improvement
- Symptoms, such as fever or cough, that improve but then return or worsen
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions

*This list is not all-inclusive. Please see a healthcare professional for any symptom that is severe or concerning.



Talk to a healthcare professional right away if your child is under 3 months old with a fever of 100.4 °F (38 °C) or higher.

Treatment

There is no cure for a cold. It will get better on its own—without antibiotics. **Antibiotics won't help you get better if you have a cold.**



Anytime antibiotics are used, they can cause side effects from mild rashes to serious health problems like severe allergic reactions, antimicrobial-resistant infections and *C. diff* (an infection causing diarrhea that can lead to severe colon damage and death).

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 or flu, talk to a healthcare professional about antiviral treatment. Treatment may reduce your risk of complications, lessen symptoms and shorten the time you are sick.

Over-the-Counter Medicines

Ask a healthcare professional about over-the-counter medicines that can help you feel better.

- Over-the-counter medicines may provide temporary relief of symptoms, but they will not cure your illness.
- Always read over-the-counter medicine product labels and use as directed.
- Tell a healthcare professional about all prescription and other over-the-counter medicines you are taking.

Some over-the-counter medicines are not recommended for children of certain ages.

Ask a healthcare professional about the right dosage of over-the-counter medicines for your child's age and size and follow all directions.

- **Pain relievers and fever reducers:**
 - Children younger than 3 months: do not give pain relievers or fever reducers unless a healthcare professional tells you to do so.
 - Children between 3 months and 6 months: only give acetaminophen.
 - Children 6 months or older: it is OK to give acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- **Cough and cold medicines:**
 - Children younger than 6 years: over-the-counter cough/cold medicines are not recommended and can result in serious and sometimes life-threatening side effects.
 - Children 6 years or older: discuss the use of over-the-counter cough and cold medicines with a healthcare professional.

How to Feel Better

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Use a clean humidifier or cool mist vaporizer.
- Use saline nasal spray or drops.
 - For young children, use a rubber suction bulb to clear mucus.
- Breathe in steam from a bowl of hot water or shower.
 - For young children, sit with the child in a bathroom filled with steam from a running shower.
- Use throat lozenges or cough drops. Do not give lozenges to children younger than 4 years of age.
- Use pasteurized honey to relieve cough for adults and children at least 1 year of age or older.

Prevention

CDC recommends that all people use core prevention strategies to protect themselves and others:

- Stay up to date with recommended vaccines and boosters.
- Practice good hygiene (practices that improve cleanliness).
- Take steps for cleaner air.

CDC's Respiratory Virus Guidance provides practical recommendations and information to help people lower risk from a range of common respiratory viral illnesses.

For more information, visit:

[cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/](https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/)



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