

First Aid: Common Cold

Kids can get eight colds a year — or more. The common cold sends more kids to the doctor than any other illness. Most colds are caused by a virus found in the air and on the things we touch. Antibiotics can't treat viruses, but you can help your child feel better.



What Are the Signs & Symptoms of a Cold?

- stuffy or runny nose (may start out watery, then turn thick yellow or green)
- itchy or sore throat
- sneezing
- cough
- headache
- mild fever
- feeling tired
- eating less

What to Do

- Ease discomfort with:
 - acetaminophen or ibuprofen as needed if your child is older than 6 months
 - a cool-mist humidifier or steamy bathroom
 - saline (saltwater) drops for a congested nose
 - gentle suction of nasal mucus using a bulb syringe when necessary
- Offer lots of liquids — breast milk or formula for babies; water and diluted juice for older kids, but no caffeinated beverages.
- **Never give cough or cold medicine to children under 6 years old.** Call a doctor first for older kids.
- **Never give aspirin** to a child.

Get Medical Care if Your Child Has:

- cold symptoms that get worse or last more than a week
- cough and congestion triggered by pollen, dust, pets, etc.
- a barking cough or a cough that is severe and happens in spasms
- trouble breathing
- a high fever and appears ill; or any fever in a baby 3 months old or younger
- a sore throat that makes it hard to eat and drink
- a bad headache

Think Prevention!

Remind kids to:

- avoid anyone who has a cold
- avoid smokers (secondhand smoke increases kids' risk of getting sick)
- wash their hands well and often, especially after nose-blowing and playing with other kids
- sneeze and cough into shirtsleeves or tissues — not hands

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