

Colds

Brief Version

What is a cold?

When your child has a cold, he often has a runny or stuffy nose. He may also have a fever, sore throat, cough, or hoarseness.

Viruses cause most colds. You can expect a healthy child to get about 6 colds a year.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Runny nose.** If your child has a lot of clear discharge from the nose, it may not be a good idea to blow his nose. Sniffing and swallowing the mucus is probably better than blowing. Blowing the nose can make the infection go into the ears or sinuses. For babies, use a soft rubber suction bulb to take out the mucus.
- **Stuffy nose.** Most stuffy noses are blocked by dry mucus. Try nosedrops of warm tap water or saline. They are better than any medicine you can buy.
 1. Mix 1/2 teaspoon of table salt in 8 ounces of water.
 2. Put 3 drops in each nostril. (For children less than 1 year old, use 1 drop.)
 3. Wait 1 minute.
 4. Then have the child blow or you can use suction bulb. Use a wet cotton swab to remove mucus that's very sticky.
- **Aches and fever.** Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever over 102°F (39°C). Do not give aspirin.
- **Cough or sore throat.** Use cough drops for children over 4 years old. Use 1/2 teaspoon corn syrup as needed for children over 1 year old.

How long does it last?

Usually the fever lasts less than 3 days, and all nose and throat symptoms are gone in a week. A cough may last 2 to 3 weeks. Watch for signs of bacterial infections such as an earache, sinus pain, yellow drainage from the eyes, or breathing trouble.

Call your child's doctor right away if:

- Your child has a hard time breathing AND is no better after you clear the nose.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

Call your child's doctor during office hours if:

- The fever lasts more than 3 days.
- The runny nose lasts more than 10 days.
- The eyes get yellow discharge.
- You think your child may have an earache or sinus pain.
- You have other questions or concerns.

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This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.