



# Colds & flu

Colds and flu are infections of the nose and throat. Both are caused by viruses.

It can be hard to tell if your child has a cold or the flu. Why? They both have the same type of symptoms. But symptoms for the flu are worse than ones for a cold. Flu symptoms come on fast. Ones for a cold come on slower.



IS IT A COLD OR THE FLU?		
Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Maybe. If so, the fever is very mild.	Yes. It can be a high fever.
Chills	No	Yes
Headache	Not in most cases	Yes. Your child may feel dizzy, too.
Body aches and pain	Mild, if any	Yes. Your child's body may ache all over.
Fatigue	Mild, if any. Your child still has energy to do most things.	Yes. Your child may not have enough energy to get out of bed.
Stuffy nose. Sneezing. Runny nose.	Yes. Mucus from the nose can start out watery and then be yellow or green.	Sometimes
Sore throat	Your child may feel a tickle in the throat before other symptoms. The throat feels scratchy.	Yes
Cough	Yes. It is a hacking cough.	Yes. The cough can become severe.
Loss of appetite	No	Yes
Nausea. Vomiting. Diarrhea.	No	Sometimes

Antibiotics **do not** treat colds and flu. Most colds clear up in about a week. Sometimes, a cold lasts up to 2 weeks.

Fever and most flu symptoms usually go away after 5 days, but coughing and feeling weak can last up to 2 weeks.



## PREVENTION

- Take your child for a yearly flu vaccine as advised.
- Don't smoke or let your child smoke.
- Keep your child away from persons who have the flu or a cold.
- See that your child eats and sleeps well and gets lots of exercise.

## Tell your child to do these things:

- Wash your hands often. Keep them away from your nose, eyes, and mouth.
- Cover your nose when you sneeze. Use a handkerchief or tissues when you sneeze, cough, or blow your nose. This helps prevent passing germs to others.



## TRIAGE QUESTIONS



With or after the flu, does your child have 1 or more of these signs of meningitis?

- Very bad headache that lasts. Stiff neck.
- High fever. Nausea or vomiting.
- Acts very sleepy and/or strange.
- Red or purple, bumpy skin rash that does not fade when you press on it.

**NO** **YES** ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE: CALL 911**



Does your child have 1 or more of these problems with a cold?

- Blue color around the lips, fingernails, or skin.
- Quick breathing or trouble breathing. Grunting sounds with breathing.
- Fever of 100.4°F or higher in a baby less than 3 months old. Fever of 104°F or higher in a child between 3 months and 3 years old.
- Severe cough. Severe wheezing.

**NO** **YES** ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**  
(Note: These may be symptoms of a virus called RSV. This virus acts like a cold in older children and adults. It can cause severe problems and be life-threatening in a baby.)



After the flu, does your child have signs of Reye's Syndrome?

**NO** **YES** ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



With or after the flu, does your child have a very hard time breathing or is he or she coughing up blood?

**NO** **YES** ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



Does your child have any of these problems?

- Wheezing.
- An earache or tugging at the ears.
- Swollen, painful glands in the neck.
- Fever between 102.2°F and up to 104°F in a child between 3 months and 3 years old. Fever over 104°F in a child age 3 years and older.

**NO** **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**

CONTINUE IN NEXT COLUMN



Is your child's throat very sore or bright red? Or does it have white spots at the back?

**NO** **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Does your child have any of these problems?

- Yellow or green mucus drains from the eyes.
- He or she coughs up thick, yellow-green, or rust-colored mucus. Or mucus like this drains from the nose for more than 24 hours.
- A bad smell from the throat, nose, or ears.

**NO** **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Does your child have pain or swelling over the sinuses that gets worse when they bend over or move their head? (The sinuses are behind the cheekbones, eyes, and forehead.) Watch out for this especially when your child also has a fever.

**NO** **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Did a deer tick bite your child 10 days to 3 weeks before he or she got sick? Was your child in the woods or someplace else where ticks live? (Note: Lyme disease, caused by a deer tick bite, can mimic flu symptoms.)

**NO** **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



Is your child's fever or coughing getting worse?

**NO** **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



**USE SELF-CARE**





## SELF-CARE

### Have your child do these things:

- Rest
- Drink lots of liquids. They help clear out the respiratory tract. This can help prevent other problems, like bronchitis.
- Eat chicken soup. It helps clear out mucus.
- Washing the hands often helps stop spreading the flu. Have your child wash his or her hands:
  - After playing with others
  - When he or she gets home from school
  - After blowing their nose
  - After touching toys or other people's things

### COVID-19:

Kids infected by the coronavirus may not have any symptoms, or their symptoms can be mild, like the common cold. Some can have more severe flu-like symptoms. Other COVID symptoms may include a loss of taste or smell, or a variety of rashes. Talk to their doctor if you suspect they have COVID to get tested and for self-care instructions.

### If your child's throat is sore, have him or her do these things:

- Gargle every few hours with 1/4 teaspoon of salt in 1/2 cup of warm water, if able to. (A child can usually do this starting at age 6.)
- Suck on a piece of hard candy or cough drop once in a while. (Don't give these to children under 4 years old.)

### Things you can do:

- Use a cool-mist vaporizer or humidifier. Use distilled (not tap) water. Clean it every day.
- For fever and muscle aches, give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Make sure you give the right kind and dose for your child's weight. (**Note:** Do not give aspirin. Medicines with salicylates have been linked to Reye's Syndrome.)
- Check with your child's doctor about using over-the-counter medicines for colds and flu for children under age 2.
- Call your child's doctor if he or she gets a fever after a cold or after the flu has gone away.
- Try to clear your child's nose. This is very important in babies under 6 months old, because some have difficulty breathing through their mouths. They can't breastfeed or bottle-feed if they can't breathe through the nose.

### To clear your child's nose:

- Use an over-the-counter spray or drops for the nose made of salt and water. An example is Ocean® brand. Follow the label's advice or that of your child's doctor.
- For a baby who can't blow his or her nose, leave the salt drops in for 1 minute. Then use a soft rubber suction bulb to draw out the mucus. Lie the baby on his or her back. Gently put the tip of the suction bulb into the nose. (You can get a suction bulb at the drug store.) Or use a cotton swab to wipe the mucus out. Don't put the suction bulb or cotton swab too far into the nose. You could cause a nosebleed.
- For a child who can blow his or her own nose, have the child do it 1 minute after the salt drops are in.