



Signs and Symptoms of the Common Cold

- Sneezing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Sore throat
- Coughing
- Watery eyes
- Mild headache
- Mild body aches

See a Healthcare Provider if You or Your Child has:

- Temperature higher than 100.4° F
- Symptoms that last more than 10 days
- Symptoms that are not relieved by over-the-counter medicines

Your healthcare provider can determine if you or your child has a cold and can recommend symptomatic therapy. If your child is younger than three months of age and has a fever, it's important to always call your healthcare provider right away.

Antibiotics are Needed When...

Antibiotics are needed only if your healthcare provider tells you that you or your child has a bacterial infection. Your healthcare provider may prescribe other medicine or give tips to help with a cold's symptoms, but antibiotics are not needed to treat a cold or runny nose.

Antibiotics Will Not Help if...

Since the common cold is caused by a virus, antibiotics will not help it get better. A runny nose or cold almost always gets better on its own, so it is better to wait and take antibiotics only when they are needed. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed can be harmful.

Each time you or your child takes an antibiotic, the bacteria that normally live in your body (on the skin, in the intestine, in the mouth and nose, etc.) are more likely to become resistant to antibiotics. Common antibiotics cannot kill infections caused by these resistant germs. [Learn more about antibiotic resistance.](#)

How to Feel Better

Rest, over-the-counter medicines and other self-care methods may help you or your child feel better. For more information about symptomatic relief, visit the [Symptom Relief](#) section of this website or talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist. Remember, always use over-the-counter products as directed. Many over-the-counter products are not recommended for children younger than certain ages.

Preventing the Common Cold

- Practice good hand hygiene
- Avoid close contact with people who have colds or other upper respiratory infections

<http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/uri/colds.html>