



## Common Cold

Common cold refers to a group of upper respiratory tract infections that are caused by viruses. This infection will affect the upper respiratory tract which includes your nose and throat and may also give symptoms of the ears, eyes and head.

Common symptoms in children include:

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion/block nose
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fever
- Body aches
- Headache
- Sometimes a rash especially in children

In younger children some of the earliest signs of a cold may be a fever, irritability or excess crying, reduced play, loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea. Nasal congestion particularly in infants may be cause of concern for parents especially if it results in noisy breathing or difficulty breathing.

**What causes the common cold and how does one get it?**

The common cold is caused by over 200 viruses among them:

- Rhinovirus
- Influenza
- parainfluenza
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)
- Adenoviruses
- Enteroviruses

These viruses are transmitted through respiratory droplets that are generated when someone coughs or sneezes, as well as mucus from a runny nose. Inhalation of these droplets or contact with surfaces or hands with the droplets and then touching one's mouth, nose or eyes may result in transmission.



It is important to avoid transmission of colds by wearing masks and avoiding touching faces with dirty or unsanitary hands. Sanitizing and coughing into the elbow are also crucial, as no vaccine can completely prevent colds.

#### **How do you treat the common cold**

The viruses that cause the common cold are self-limiting. They cause symptoms as the body responds to the infection, which eventually subside as the person's immune system fights and overcomes it. This will take a few days to a couple of weeks (ideally 5–14 days) to completely clear and should not raise anxiety as long as the child is improving. There is no medication that can cure the common cold. Most of the medication available only help relieve the symptoms and make one comfortable.

Children should be encouraged to keep warm, take fluids, and stay hydrated to improve symptoms. Antibiotics should only be prescribed when there is suspicion of a bacterial infection by a doctor or there is evidence of bacterial laboratory confirmation. Routine use of antibiotics is highly discouraged as it poses a risk for antibiotic resistance. Cough syrups, though heavily marketed, are not indicated for children under 2 years of age.

Nasal congestion in infants can cause difficulty breathing and noisy breathing, which can be alleviated with saline nasal drops or traditional home methods for nasal mucus removal.

**AVOID** self-prescribing of medication or buying medication from pharmacists not licensed to prescribe medication.