



A cold is an infection of the nose, sinuses, and/or throat almost always caused by a virus. A virus is a type of germ that causes infections. There are more than 200 types of viruses that can cause a cold.

Colds

How are colds spread?

The most common way to get a cold is by contact with a person who has a cold. A cold virus spreads easily. For example: when a person with a cold sneezes, coughs, talks, or laughs, the virus can spread into the air as droplets from their mouth or nose. These droplets can spread to people as they breathe and to surfaces within 6 feet. Cold viruses can spread to your hands if you touch anything that has the virus on it. If you then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth, you can get infected with cold virus.

What are signs of a cold?

- ◆ Stuffy or runny nose.
- ◆ Sneezing.
- ◆ Sore throat.
- ◆ Coughing.
- ◆ Headache (mild).
- ◆ Muscle aches and pains (mild).
- ◆ Chest discomfort (sometimes).
- ◆ Tiredness (sometimes).
- ◆ Fever (rare).

How can you feel better if you have a cold?

- ◆ Get plenty of rest.
- ◆ Consider the use of over-the-counter drugs.
Note: not all over-the-counter drugs are safe for children. Find more on drugs safe to give children at: www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/symptom-relief.html#d.
- ◆ Use a clean humidifier to help relieve congestion.
- ◆ Soothe a sore throat with ice chips, throat spray, or lozenges (do not give lozenges to young children).
- ◆ Gargle with warm salt water.
- ◆ Do not smoke.
- ◆ Avoid second-hand smoke.

If you have a cold:

- ◆ Clean hands often with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.
- ◆ Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your sleeve.
- ◆ Do not share eating or drinking utensils, hand towels, or toothpaste.



- ◆ Stay at home if possible.
- ◆ Drink plenty of non-caffeinated fluids, such as water, teas, broths, and sports drinks.
- ◆ See your health care provider if:
 - Your temperature goes over 100.4°F.
 - Your signs last over 10 days.

How can you avoid a cold?

- ◆ Limit or avoid contact with people who are sick.
- ◆ Clean hands often.
- ◆ Stay healthy. Eat the right foods and get enough sleep.

What about pregnancy?

Pregnant women should not take any over-the-counter drugs for a cold without consulting with their health care provider. If you are pregnant, you may be more likely to get a cold because pregnancy slightly weakens the immune system.

For more on colds see:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

Common Cold and Runny Nose

www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/URI/colds.html

Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work – Symptom Relief

www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/symptom-relief.html

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID/NIH):

Common Cold

www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/commonCold/Pages/default.aspx