

Portland Pediatric Group

The Common Cold

The common cold is a viral infection caused by one of many hundreds of viruses. It is an infection of the upper respiratory tract (nose and throat) that is spread by direct person to person contact. Colds are more common in the winter months but exposure to cold and damp weather or not wearing a hat do not cause colds though they may make the symptoms worse.

The frequency of colds is related to age and exposure to others with colds. Preschool children have an average of six colds a year. During the winter months at least half the population will have colds. Frequent hand washing is the single most important measure in deterring the spread of cold viruses.

COMMON SYMPTOMS:

fever/chills
muscle aches
scratchy throat
nasal congestion
sneezing
cough
headache
fatigue
earache

Young children usually have a fever with all colds. Most children present with a temperature of 102-104 degrees. A higher temperature or one over 102 lasting longer than 48 hours should be seen by your pediatrician.

*There is no cure for the
common cold!*

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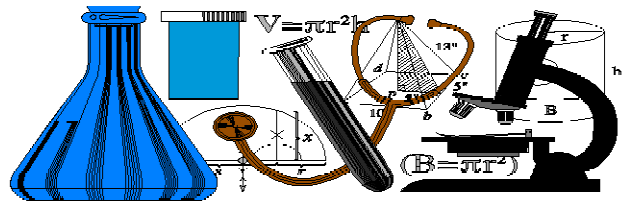
Basic Treatment

There is no "cure" for the common cold but often bacterial infections can superimpose themselves on a viral infection. When this occurs, an antibiotic may be useful. Otherwise, it is important to realize that antibiotics do not treat colds!

There are many favorite remedies for colds that help to either suppress the symptoms or aid the body's natural defenses.

The following home remedies are suggested:

- 1) rest
- 2) liquids
- 3) acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) for headache, muscle aches and fever greater than 101.
- 4) an ultrasonic or evaporative humidifier to soothe the air passages and loosen nasal secretions. (rinse the humidifier daily and clean with a solution of white vinegar weekly)
- 5) elevation of the head
- 6) normal saline nose drops (Nasal or Ayr)
- 7) Vicks or Watkins Salve to protect the nose



It is important to realize that the body defends itself by producing fever and mucous to kill the invading viruses. Yes, that's right, the runny nose and fever are helpful! When using over the counter medicines, one should use them sparingly to perhaps help a child sleep or function better. Remember that cough and cold medicines do not get rid of the cold and, theoretically, may make the cold worse. Every cold medicine "Sudafed". They are all effectively the same. When in doubt, you may ask us.

Call us if the cough or fever persists or worsens!

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