

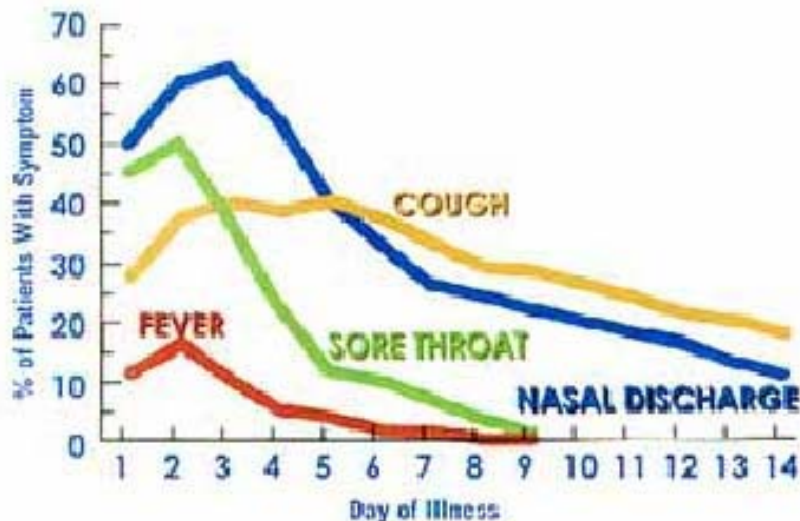


COLDS IN CHILDREN

Most colds and coughs are caused by viral infections in the nose and throat. Sneezing, runny nose or congestion, sore throat, fever and muscle aches are typical symptoms. Despite the discomfort, colds are not serious illnesses and symptoms can persist for 7-10 days. Antibiotics are not effective medicines against colds and are used only for complications of colds such as ear infections, sinus infections or pneumonia.

How Long Will Cold and Flu Symptoms Last?

Children can typically begin getting colds around 6 months of age and may average 6-7 colds a year through pre-school. The main reason for this is that they are constantly being exposed to new viruses and have not built up any antibody protection. Children who attend day care, nursery or preschool are exposed to more infections than children who don't. Children with older siblings also have more indirect exposures. Colds are more common in winter when people spend more time in crowded areas. Smoking in the home increases a child's susceptibility to colds and coughs as well as ear infections, sinus infections, croup, wheezing and asthma.



Parents may worry that a child who is repeatedly ill has some serious underlying disease. Rather, colds are an unavoidable part of growing up and provide an “educational experience” for your child’s immune system. If your child is vigorous and gaining weight, this is a sign of general good health. The number of colds will decrease over the years as your child’s body builds up a good supply of antibodies to various viruses. This said, it is always critical to good health to avoid getting run down by eating right and getting enough sleep.

Children get over the cold by themselves. The basic approach is to drink plenty of clear fluids. Chicken soup has been found to have properties which aid in recovery. Sleep is especially important once your child is sick. For congestion, saline nose drops, Vicks products and elevating the head of the bed are helpful. For cough, lozenges or tea with honey and lemon can be used in the age appropriate child. For fever, headache and sore throat Tylenol or Advil may be used. There are other over-the-counter medicines which may treat the symptoms and make your child more comfortable but ultimately, your child’s immune system will clear the infection. Children shed germs during the first days of illness, before they may even look sick, as well as several days after symptoms develop. Your child can return to regular activity when the fever is gone and symptoms are not excessively noisy or disruptive to other children.