

Colds and Flu Fact Sheet

What are "colds" and "flu"? They are common infections of the head and chest caused by viruses. Colds cause mild illness for five to seven days with:

- Stuffy and runny nose (clear or greenish mucus)
- Headache and sore throat
- Sneezing and coughing

The flu makes you a little sicker for a little longer with:

- Fever and chills
- Muscle aches and fatigue

How do colds and flu spread? They are very contagious. They spread when people:

- Touch infected mucus from the nose or saliva
- Cough and sneeze
- Kiss on the lips
- Share food, eating utensils, and mouthed toys
- Are together in crowded, poorly-ventilated, and overheated rooms

When are colds and flu contagious?

- From one to two days *before* the symptoms start and the first few days of the illness.
- It usually takes several days after exposure to colds or flu to become ill.

How do I know if my child has a cold or the flu? By the typical symptoms

What should I do if my child has a cold or the flu?

Treatment: Follow your doctor's recommendations:

- Help your child recover by providing:
- Rest, food, and plenty of liquids to drink.
- A cool mist vaporizer.
- For fever, the doctor might recommend acetaminophen. *Never give aspirin-it can cause a fatal condition called Reye 's Syndrome.*

You do not need to:

- Give antihistamine or decongestant medications
- Bundle children up or keep them indoors.
- Should my child stay home? Children with colds or flu can attend school as long as they feel well enough to participate.

To limit the spread:

- Wipe noses with clean tissues, throw them away, and wash your hands.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow and away from people.
- Don't share food, pacifiers, bottles, or toothbrushes. Wash eating utensils, drinking cups, and toys well between uses.
- Don't kiss children on the mouth.
- Open windows indoors and maximize outdoor play.