



## ***What do you need to know about your child's cold?***

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Cold and flu season is quickly approaching. Often times, it is difficult to know when to come in for an office visit, and when to just tough it out at home.

The diagram below shows the symptoms that come with colds and how long they can last. Nasal discharge can be any variety of colors, including green, and still be caused by viruses. Sore throat is often one of the first signs of a cold, so if there is any runny nose or cough, your child may not have strep throat. Typically, we suspect that there may be another problem like ear infection, sinusitis, or bronchitis, when the symptoms fall out of this usual pattern. In other words, if the fever returns on day 6 or 7, or if the runny nose increases again on day 12 or 13, there may be something else going on, and we would suggest an office visit.

Recent recommendations by the FDA have suggested limited use of cold and cough medicines in children. They are not recommended for children under 2 due to the lack of evidence to show that they work as well as a high number of side effects. For children older than 2, again, no studies show benefit from cold and cough medicines. When necessary, it is suggested that you buy products that target the single most troublesome symptom and use single ingredient medications to fight that. For example, Benadryl for runny nose to help slow the discharge or Sudafed if the child is stuffy. Often, combination medications have things in them that work against each other and contain multiple ingredients that may not be needed (like Acetaminophen when there is no fever).

You know, Grandmothers are the smartest people on earth! They usually tell you to get your rest, drink lots of fluids, take steamy showers, drink hot tea with lemon and honey (only in children over 1), and to eat chicken soup. There are actually medical studies that show that all of these things help with symptoms, even though the cold is still going to last 10-14 days. The fluids and steamy showers help loosen up the mucus. You can take it one step further and use saline washes to get directly in the nasal passages to rinse the mucus away. This can be done at all ages, even with saline drops in infants. Honey has been shown to be as effective as dextromethorphan (Delsym or Robitussin DM) and narcotics (like codeine) to help quiet coughs without the side effects (sleepiness and decreasing breathing drive), but shouldn't be used in children less than one year of age. Chicken soup actually has a chemical called cysteine that breaks up mucus! Who knew?!?

Your grandmother also probably told you to wash your hands any time you coughed or sneezed, didn't she? Great idea! Also, wipe computer keyboards with alcohol wipes, counters and doorknobs with sanitizing products, and clean toys often.

If you have any questions about any of this information, please ask your healthcare provider!

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### DURATION OF COLD SYMPTOMS

