

The common cold may be caused by any of over 100 known cold viruses. Symptoms include:



- runny nose
- sneezing
- coughing
- mild sore throat
- watery eyes
- feeling unwell.

Fever is very uncommon, especially in people over three years of age. Most people will recover within 10 days.

Newborn babies are protected for about the first 6 months by antibodies from their mothers. After this, young children are very susceptible to colds because they haven't built up immunity, they have close contact with adults and other children, they can't practice good personal hygiene and they have tiny nose and ear passages which are easily blocked.

It is not abnormal for children to have five or more colds a year.

It is a myth that people get colds because of a weakened immune system. Healthy people with normal immune systems will almost always become infected if the virus enters their noses – sometimes they may not develop any symptoms.

Getting a cold has nothing to do with being cold or chilled, and there is no scientific evidence that "feeding a cold" (or starving a fever) makes the slightest difference to how long it lasts.

Spread is by contact with droplets from the nose of infected people, and can be spread indirectly by contact with hands, tissues or other articles soiled by nose, and throat discharges.

Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

1 – 3 days.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

From about 1 day before symptoms begin, and for the first 5 days of the illness.

Treatment

There is no specific antiviral treatment against the viruses which cause colds. Paracetamol and other medications available from pharmacies may provide relief of symptoms.



Aspirin should not be given to children under 12 years of age unless specifically recommended by a doctor

Control of spread

- Wash hands after contact with soiled tissues or with nose, and throat discharges.
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing.
- Exclusion from child care, preschool, school or work is not necessary, but a person with a cold should stay home until they feel well.



Hand washing