
Common Cold

Description: Common colds are caused by many different viruses. Children under age 5 may get colds several times each year.

Symptoms: Clear runny nose and eyes, sneezing, coughing, mild sore throat, chills, generalized discomfort with little or no fever.

How it is Spread: Colds are spread by direct contact (coughing and sneezing) and indirectly from contaminated hands, tissues and other articles soiled by nose and throat discharge.

Incubation Period: Between 12 hours and 5 days, usually 48 hours.

How Long Can a Person Pass the Infection to Others? For about one day before symptoms begin and during the first five days of illness.

Responsibilities of Parents and Caregivers:

Because the common cold can be caused by a number of different viruses, it is not necessary to notify all parents of every exposure. Exclusion of the child with the common cold is not necessary unless the child has a fever or is ill.

Control of Spread:

- Teach the child to cover his mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Dispose of tissues soiled with nose and throat discharges.
- Wash hands after contact with soiled tissues and articles and after contact with nose and throat discharge.
- Clean and sanitize all common surfaces and toys on a regular basis. (See: Cleaning and Sanitation Materials.)

Treatment: No specific treatment is available. Acetaminophen-containing medicines (such as Tylenol), cough suppressants and decongestants may help to relieve cold symptoms in children older than 3 months. Do not give aspirin.

Comments: Watch for new or more severe symptoms. They may indicate other more serious infections.