

CHILDREN  
WITH

# common cold



## Children with common cold

### General information:

A cold is by far the most common infection in children. It makes up the majority of the average of 12-14 infections that young children contract every year. There are more than 200 different viruses that cause a cold, and therefore, young children may catch one cold after the other. Sometimes the cold is accompanied by fever.

### How is it contracted?

Children become infected via snot and sneezing and by inhaling small droplets (drop infection). In practice, the droplets spread as a result of poor hand hygiene, when you have snot on your hands. The risk of infection is highest when the child is indoors and in close contact with other people. Usually, it takes 1-5 days from the child has been infected until the symptoms show.

### Symptoms:

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- "Stuffy" nose
- Coughing and mucus that can be coughed up
- Sore throat
- The child often runs a fever, and it is not unusual to have a high temperature over 40°

A cold will usually last for about a week, but the coughing may persist up to two weeks. A cold can also lead to other conditions; the most common is inflammation of the middle ear, asthmatic bronchitis, eye infection, pneumonia and sinus infection.

### Treatment/good advice:

- There is no effective treatment. Antibiotics do not help as it is a virus; yet antibiotics are used to treat certain complications
- Saline drops can loosen thick snot which makes it difficult for small children to breathe through the nose. In small babies, runny snot can be sucked out using a nose suction device (available from the pharmacy)
- You can buy nose drops at the pharmacy without a prescription, but these should not be used for more than a week. Use the dose for children (ask the pharmacist)
- Rich cream or a similar product can protect a red, sore nose

- The child should sleep with its head elevated in a cool room as this will make it easier to breathe
- Offer the child plenty to drink. This loosens the mucus and makes it easier to cough up
- Try to get the child to change position, sleep on both sides, sit up, play as much as possible. This also makes it easier to cough up and spit out mucus
- If the child does not run a high fever, it can play outside if dressed properly. Children can also sleep outside in a pram if you keep a close watch on them.

**Do not give the child cough medicine, because it is important that the child coughs up the mucus.**

### When to see a doctor?

Contact a doctor if the child:

- refuses to drink and cannot pee
- becomes apathetic and weak (not interested in playing)
- runs a high fever for several consecutive days
- has long coughing attacks where the colour of the face becomes abnormal or the child gets exhausted
- has difficulty breathing most of the time
- makes you worry or feel insecure

Contact your general practitioner first because he/she knows your child better than the doctor on call. You can also get good advice and guidance from your health visitor.

### Prevention:

In practice, prevention of a common colds is impossible, but remember:

- Always wash your own/the child's hands after being in contact with spittle/snot
- Use paper tissues and throw them away immediately after use.
- It does not help to keep the child indoors – on the contrary, there is a lower risk of infection among children when they are outdoors because they are not in close contact and there is more room to move around
- Healthy children and children with a cold should not share toys.

In general, it is important for both children and adults to wash their hands often as it has been shown to reduce the spread of of the condition.

### Childcare:

The child can return to childcare as soon as the fever has gone and it feels well enough to play with other children. It is not necessary to keep your child at home just because it has a runny nose.

## Parental guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared by a working group set up by the departments of paediatrics in Herning, Randers, Skejby and Viborg.

The intention with these guidelines is to provide parents with advice across the following sectors: health visitors, general practitioners, doctors on call, and the staff at paediatric admission wards in the Central Denmark Region.

The parental guidelines can be seen and downloaded from the internet on the web site [www.fv.rm.dk](http://www.fv.rm.dk)

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