

# Colds, the Flu, and Your Child: All About Viruses

## What are colds and the flu?

Colds and the flu are respiratory infections caused by viruses. They are spread from one person to another through coughing or sneezing. **Antibiotics cannot fight viruses. Antibiotics only work against infections caused by bacteria.**

## What's the difference?

Because colds and the flu have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to tell them apart. The flu generally comes on more quickly than a cold and is often more severe. Colds do not usually cause serious health problems like pneumonia or bacterial infections, while the flu can lead to these and other serious illnesses.

## Preventing a cold or the flu?

There is no medicine to prevent a cold. **A flu shot is offered each fall to people at risk of catching the flu (children between 6 months and 59 months of age and those who live in a household with people who have certain long-term illnesses).**

## Steps to help prevent the spread of colds or the flu

Make sure your children:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when they are sick
- Cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they sneeze
- Wash their hands often and carefully
- Avoid touching their eyes, noses, and mouths
- Get plenty of sleep each night
- Eat healthy foods as part of their daily diet
- Drink plenty of water
- Don't share personal items such as cups, glasses, forks, spoons, or toothbrushes

## What to do if your children get sick

1. **Make sure they get plenty of rest.**
2. **Give them plenty of water to drink.**
3. **Ask your children's doctor which medicines are right for their illnesses and ages.**
4. **Use a cool-mist humidifier in your children's rooms.**

## When should I call my child's doctor?

Call the doctor if you have concerns about your child's:

- **Cough**
- **Runny nose with green or yellow mucus**
- **Sore throat**
- **Breathing problems**
- **Chest pain**
- **Earache or pain in the face**
- **Stomachache**
- **Fever**
- **Headache**
- **Symptoms that continue or get worse over several days**

Plan Logs

Variable Information

