

# I have a cold/cough, should I see the doctor?

## What causes coughing?

A cough is a normal reaction to help clear your airways of mucus. This usually clears up on its own within two or three weeks.

**Dry coughs:** felt in the throat as a tickle that sets off the coughing, so no phlegm is produced.

**Chesty coughs:** phlegm is produced, and coughing clears them from your airways.

Whether dry or chesty, most coughs are caused by viral infections and will go away on their own.

## What causes colds?

Colds are caused by a virus.

## What are the symptoms of a cold?

- Runny nose, can begin with clear mucus that develops into thicker, green mucus
- Blocked nose
- Sore throat
- Sneezing
- Cough
- You may also experience a mild fever, earache, tiredness and headache.
- Your 'sinuses' may ache a bit. This is not sinusitis.

Symptoms develop over one or two days and gradually get better after a few days. Some colds can last for up to two weeks.

## Self Care Advice:

In most cases, you will be able to treat the symptoms of a cough or a cold yourself at home by doing the following:

- Drink plenty of
- Get plenty of rest
- Eat healthily: a low-fat, high-fibre diet is recommended, including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Salt water gargling
- Taking over the counter cough/cold remedy- this won't cure your cough/cold but may ease it

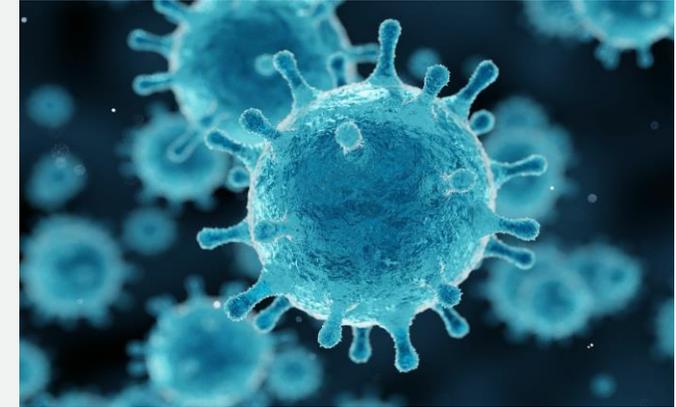
Many children will lose their appetite when they have a cold but it is important that they drink a good amount of fluid. Their appetite should return within a few days.

## Antibiotics are not effective in treating a cold or the majority of coughs as these are viral and not bacterial.

Antibiotics can have unpleasant side effects such as diarrhoea, thrush, rashes or tummy upsets. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed can produce resistant germs which means that they will not work so well against more serious infections.

The cough can last longer than the actual period you are unwell, as although your body has fought the infection, it may take longer for its effects to go away.

Note: Although a cough can feel and sound nasty, it will not hurt you or your child. It is nature's way of clearing the virus phlegm from your lungs.



## Seek medical attention if you or your child experience one or more of these:

- 1) You feel wheezy or short of breath ,
- 2) You have a very high temperature, >39 degree Celsius ( it is always helpful to have a thermometer in the house)
- 3) You start coughing up blood or have any chest pain
- 4) You have a serious underlying lung condition such as COPD, congestive heart failure or asthma
- 5) You are taking any immunosuppressants
- 6) If the cough persists and continues for longer than 3 weeks, particularly if you have ever smoked or been exposed to asbestos
- 7) The cough does not improve or gets worse after 2-3 weeks
- 8) You are feeling much more unwell in yourself