

Frequently Asked Questions

Flu and Colds in Children

How can Medi24 help?

If this leaflet does not sufficiently answer your questions, please call us – we are happy to help.

If necessary and considered appropriate by our doctor, **prescription medication** can be prescribed (however, no codeine-based cough medicines).

Please note that we are **unable to provide sick leave certificates** for school or work absences for students, apprentices, or parents of sick children. For such certificates, please contact your family doctor or pediatrician.

How can I keep my child healthy and prevent infections?

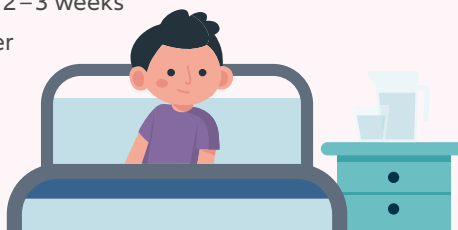
- ✓ **Fresh air** and **outdoor play / regular exercise**, enough **sleep**, and a healthy, **balanced diet**
- ✓ **Wash hands often**, especially before eating or after blowing the nose
- ✓ Try to **limit contact** with people who are sick
- ✓ **Flu vaccine**: recommended for children with chronic conditions or if close contacts / family members are at risk



How can I tell the difference between flu and a cold?

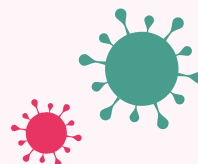
Flu (influenza):

- ✓ **Sudden onset**, child appears very ill
- ✓ High **fever** ($\geq 39^\circ\text{C}$), often the main or only symptom; may last a few days and can cause febrile seizures
- ✓ **Typical**: Severe headache and body aches, fatigue, dry cough; gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea) more common than in adults
- ✓ **Occasionally**: ear pain, conjunctivitis of the eyes
- ✓ **Duration**: 7–14 days; cough often lasts 2–3 weeks
- ✓ **Improvement**: of fever / body aches after 3–5 days, fatigue may persist longer



Cold (respiratory tract infection):

- ✓ **Slow onset**, generally mild
- ✓ **Typical**: runny / blocked nose, cough, sore throat is common
- ✓ **Fever**: more common in children than in adults
- ✓ **Rare** and rather mild: headache & body aches
- ✓ **Duration**: 7–14 days
- ✓ **Improvement**: usually after 5–7 days; cough may persist longer



When should my child see a doctor?

- ✓ If **fever** ($> 38.5^\circ$) lasts longer than 3 days or recurs repeatedly
- ✓ If **symptoms do not improve after 5–7 days** or worsen, or if **cough does not improve within 2 weeks**
- ✓ If the child is **very weak / lethargic** or **hardly drinks** anything, if **breathing is laboured** and / or **chest retractions** are visible, if **barking cough** (suspected croup) or **ear pain** for > 2 days occurs (often sign of bacterial ear infection)
- ✓ **Infants, toddlers and children with chronic illnesses** (e.g. asthma, heart defects, immune deficiency) should see a doctor early

How does the doctor make the diagnosis?

- ✓ Usually by **talking** with you and your child and doing a **physical examination**
- ✓ Blood tests or X-rays: only in severe or complicated cases
- ✓ Nose / throat swab test for germs: usually only done for children at risk, with complications, or in severe cases



What can I do to make my child feel better?

Loving care and patience help best – the **immune system needs time** to recover. You can support healing and **ease symptoms** by:

- ✓ **Rest and routine:** children don't need strict bed rest if they feel okay – a **calm daily rhythm** is enough. **Fresh air** and light activity are fine if child has no fever and feels well
- ✓ **Encourage fluids:** regularly offer water, tea, diluted juices
- ✓ **Light meals:** small portions if appetite is present
- ✓ **Improve indoor climate:** ventilate apartment regularly (open all windows for 5 min, 2–3 times daily), increase humidity (strengthens the mucous membranes, reduces dry cough / nasal congestion)

Home remedies or medicines don't make a cold or flu go away faster.



Do antibiotics help against flu or colds?

No – colds and flu are **caused by viruses**, so antibiotics don't help.

Antibiotics are only necessary in the case of an additional **bacterial** infection (such as pneumonia or an ear infection), and a doctor has to decide if that's the case.

Can my child go to school, daycare, or visit the grandparents?

- ✓ With **mild cold symptoms, no fever**, and if your child is otherwise doing well (**eating, drinking, and playing normally**), going to school, kindergarden or daycare is fine
- ✓ **Keep your child at home** if they have a **fever** or strong cold / flu symptoms (for about 3–5 days)
- ✓ **Avoid contact with vulnerable people** (pregnant women, elderly, people with chronic illness, newborns) while strong symptoms are present (usually the first 5–7 days)

Home remedies and medicines that can help ease symptoms:

Runny / blocked nose:

- ✓ Babies / toddlers: Clean the nose with a nasal aspirator; if no nasal aspirator is available: gently clean the nose with a twisted tissue (do not push upwards)
- ✓ For older children: Steam inhalation (saline solution / chamomile tea)
- ✓ Saline nasal drops / spray
- ✓ Essential oils: Avoid essential oils in babies / toddlers (risk of breathing irritation). Use only diluted and carefully in older kids, apply e.g. on clothing / chest – never directly on the face or under the nose

Fever:

- ✓ Light clothing, don't overdress
- ✓ Depending on the child's overall condition, fever medicine may be given (paracetamol or ibuprofen, dose according to the child's weight and as directed on the package or by your doctor)



Cough:

- ✓ Encourage intake of fluids, elevate upper body, fresh air
- ✓ Steam inhalation (saline solution / chamomile tea)
- ✓ Honey (not for babies under 1 year): 1 teaspoon pure or in a warm drink at night to relieve dry cough
- ✓ Warm chest compress: dip a cloth in warm water, wring it out, place it on the chest, cover with a dry cloth (only if it feels comfortable, not if the child has chills / fever)
- ✓ Hot water bottle / cherry pit pillow – check the temperature to avoid burns

Sore throat:

- ✓ Warm or cool drinks, as preferred
- ✓ Gargle with sage / chamomile tea (for older children)
- ✓ Sucking lozenges only if age-appropriate (beware of choking hazard)

Many cough and cold medicines, as well as multisymptom cold remedies, **hardly help children** and can cause side effects. They should only be used if recommended by a doctor. If treatment is needed at all, it is better to target the specific symptoms.

Can my child travel by plane if they have a cold or the flu?

- ✓ **Mild cold:** flying is usually possible, but symptoms may worsen (e.g. ear pressure, discomfort, coughing)
- ✓ **Severe flu symptoms, blocked nose or ear pain:** it is better to postpone the trip
- ✓ **Tips:** use saline nasal spray / drops before take-off / landing, encourage drinking of fluids; use a pacifier / chewing gum to help with ear pressure
- ✓ **If in doubt:** please call us, we are happy to help