



Managing colds and flu

Advice for parents/carers on caring for a sick child and minimising the spread of germs



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Caring for your family

Healthy hygiene

With over 80 years' expertise in hygiene and a shared interest in protecting infants and young children from infections, Dettol, together with the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA), has developed this leaflet to help you care for your child when they have a cold or flu and help prevent it spreading to others.

Colds and flu

Colds and flu (influenza) are both highly infectious illnesses. They share some of the same symptoms – such as sore throat and cough – but are caused by different viruses.

A cold is usually a mild illness that mainly affects the nose and throat. Flu tends to be more severe, often making you feel so unwell that you have to stay in bed until you feel better. In some cases, flu can be very serious and may require hospital treatment.

Children and adults with long-term health conditions – such as asthma, diabetes, heart or lung disease, or those with weakened immunity – are more at risk of developing complications like a bacterial chest infection or middle ear infection. Babies, pregnant women and the elderly are also at greater risk. An annual flu vaccination is available on the NHS to help protect children and adults at risk of flu and its complications.

Is it flu or just a cold?

In addition to typical cold symptoms, it's probably flu if your child:

- feels unwell, weak and very tired
- has a sudden high temperature
- has aches and pains.

A severe cold can also cause aches and a high temperature, so it can be hard to tell the difference. Generally, though, symptoms such as fever, fatigue and muscle aches are more likely and more severe with flu.

See your doctor if you are concerned

Whether it's a cold or flu, seek medical advice if you are worried about your child's symptoms or if your child has:

- a long-term condition, such as asthma or diabetes
- a weak immune system
- a high fever (38°C or more if your child is less than 3 months; 39°C or more if your child is less than 6 months old)
- difficulty breathing or coughs up blood
- other symptoms that concern you, such as severe headache, abdominal or chest pain
- symptoms that don't improve after 7 days.

If your GP is unavailable,
contact your local out-of-hours service
or NHS 111/NHS Direct Wales
0845 46 47 for advice.



Looking after your poorly child

If your child has flu, chances are they'll feel too poorly to go to school/nursery. It's best to keep them off until they have recovered. When your child has a cold, they generally only need to stay away from school/nursery if they feel unwell.

Offer lots to drink and plenty of rest

If your child is generally healthy, you can usually manage the symptoms of cold or flu without seeing a doctor. Let them rest at home, dress them appropriately for their surroundings, keep their room at a comfortable temperature, and offer lots to drink. If they are hungry, let them eat.

Warm, moist air may help to ease a blocked nose, so try taking your child into a steamy bathroom or try using a vaporiser to humidify the air. You can also try rubbing a vapour rub into your child's chest and back to help soothe respiratory symptoms.

If your child has aches and pains, speak to your pharmacist or health visitor for advice on medicines that can help.



Stop germs spreading

Cold and flu viruses spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, sending infected droplets into the air around them. These may be breathed in by another person or contaminate surrounding surfaces. If you touch your nose, mouth or eyes after touching a contaminated surface, then you could become infected. Good hygiene is therefore essential.

Teach good hygiene habits

Show your child how to sneeze or cough into a tissue and put it straight in the bin, washing their hands afterwards. Make sure you are setting a good example by doing this yourself.

Encourage thorough hand washing, explaining why it's important. Teach your child the 8-step hand washing shown on the right. It should take 45-60 seconds to wash your hands properly, or about as long as it takes to sing the 'Happy Birthday' song twice.

Disinfect surfaces

Minimise the spread of germs at home by cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that your family often touch, such as door handles, hand rails, light switches, the telephone, taps and the toilet flush handle.

8-steps to clean hands



1
Wet hands with running water and apply a small amount of soap.



2
Rub hands palm to palm (away from the water).



3
Rub each palm over the back of the other hand with fingers interlaced.



4
Rub between the fingers with the fingers interlaced and the palms together.



5
Rub the back of the fingers with the fingers interlocking.



6
Rub each thumb clasped in the palm of the other hand.



7
Rub both palms with the finger tips.



8
Rinse hands in clean running water and dry with a clean dry towel.

Remember to wash your own hands properly too,
as your child will copy you.

Dettol aims to help protect children and their families from infections through good hygiene. For healthy tips and more, visit our website at www.dettol.co.uk.



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Use biocides safely. Always read the label and product information before use.

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