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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

JANUARY 2012

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: KIDS AND COLDS

If your child suddenly has a sore throat, starts sneezing and keeps blowing his nose, chances are he has a cold. Colds are common, especially this time of year. An average child may have up to 8 colds in year. In fact, colds are the no. 1 reason kids stay out of school and see a doctor.

How do you get a cold?

There are over 200 types of cold viruses. Colds are often spread through tiny, unseen particles in the air. When a person who has the virus coughs or sneezes, those particles spread throughout the air and anyone can breathe them in. The cold can also spread from touching something that has the cold virus on it and then touching the eye or nose with the same hand. Other factors that affect getting a cold are dry air and cigarette smoke. When the air is dry, either outdoors or indoors, the body will have lower resistance to the cold virus. Also, if you smoke or are around smokers, it is more likely that you or your child will develop a cold.

You may have heard that you can catch a cold from being outside when the temperature is low without a jacket or with wet hair. These are NOT ways to catch a cold!

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Signs that you or your child may have a cold:

- Sore throat
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Sneezing
- Coughing

Kids may also:

- Have a mild fever
- Have a headache
- Have a loss of appetite
- Be very tired

Preventing the spread of colds around the house

Colds are most likely to be spread during the first 2 to 4 days after the first signs appear. However, colds can be spread up to 3 weeks after the start of the illness. In the home, a sick child can spread the virus through kissing other family members or touching family members if their hands have not been recently washed. Reminding children to wash their hands is one way to prevent the spread of colds. It can also be spread from particles in the air, so remind family members to cough or sneeze into their elbow, not their hands. If they do cough or sneeze into their hands — have them wash their hands immediately. If your child touches an object, such as a doorknob, and then someone else touches the doorknob and then their nose or eyes, they may catch the virus. Remember to wash your own hands often. If you are picking up used tissues you will want to wash your hands immediately. If you have a sick child, you will want to wash their sheets and towels so that others will not use them. You may even need to clean their toys. Cleaning computer keyboards, video game controllers and cell phones are also a good idea.

Reminding children to wash their hands is one way to prevent the spread of colds.



Treatment

Unfortunately, there is no medicine you can take to cure a cold. Some medicines are made to reduce the symptoms such as a headache and a fever. Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider before starting your child on any medications.

Some ways that you may be able to help your child get through the cold include:

- Saline drops for the nose — these can help loosen up some of the mucus and make it easier to blow the nose
- Cough drops for the sore throat
- A warm bath or heating pad for sore muscles
- A steamy shower to help your child breathe a little easier

Although most colds last up to a week, if you think your child has more than a cold or is getting worse, go ahead and make an appointment with your healthcare provider.

REFERENCES:

- Nemours Kids Health. Chilling Out with Colds. November 2010
- Nemours Kids Health. Common Cold. December 2009

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