

Managing Cold Symptoms

The common cold is a viral infection of the nose and throat, also called an upper respiratory tract infection (URI). A cold is usually harmless, although it might not feel that way.

Common Symptoms of a Cold

- Low-grade fever (100.4°F / 38°C or slightly higher)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Head congestion or facial pain
- Red or watery eyes
- Stuffy or runny nose (clear at first, then may turn yellow or green, which does not indicate bacterial infection)
- Ear pain or pressure
- Fatigue

Duration of Symptoms

Cold symptoms can last **14 to 21 days**. A dry, hacking cough can persist for up to **4 weeks**.

Treatment and Symptom Management

- **Rest & Fluids:** Stay hydrated and get plenty of sleep to help your body recover.
- **Over-the-Counter Medications:**
 - Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever and pain.
 - Saline nasal sprays for congestion.
 - Honey (for children over 1 year old) to help with cough.
- **Home Remedies:**
 - Warm saltwater gargles for sore throats.
 - Humidifiers to keep the air moist and ease congestion.
 - Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke exposure.

When to Seek Medical Attention

Contact a healthcare provider if:

- Symptoms worsen after initial improvement.
- You have trouble breathing or persistent wheezing.
- Fever lasts more than 6 days or returns after subsiding.
- Severe headache persists despite medication.
- Signs of dehydration (dry mouth, reduced urination).