



Is it a cold or the flu? How to tell and how to make your child more comfortable

Your child is sent home from school with a sore throat, cough and a high fever. Could it be the flu that's been going around? Or is it just a common cold?

Before you can figure out how to help your child feel better, you need to know what's causing the symptoms. Typically, the flu (also known as influenza) makes a child feel worse than a cold, but it's not always that easy to tell the difference between the two.

Colds

Colds are the number one reason children visit the doctor and miss school. A cold is a contagious viral infection of the upper respiratory tract that is caused by a virus.

Children get as many as six to nine colds a year. A child can catch a cold by touching the hands of someone with a cold or by someone else who has a cold that is coughing or sneezing.

Symptoms of a cold are often a tickle in the throat, a runny or stuffy nose and sneezing.

Children with colds may also have a sore throat, cough, headache, mild fever, fatigue, muscle aches and loss of appetite.

The flu

The flu is a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract. The flu even has its own season—from November to April. Most cases occur between late December and early March.

The flu is caused by a virus, too. A child can catch the flu the same way he or she can catch a cold—by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching his or her mouth or nose or by being near someone with the flu who is coughing or sneezing.

Flu symptoms are more severe and last longer than cold symptoms. The flu can also lead to more serious illnesses, especially in infants and people with chronic diseases, like asthma and diabetes.

Flu symptoms

- High fever
- Headache

- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Vomiting
- Dry cough
- Runny nose
- Muscle aches
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Diarrhea

Tips to help your child feel better

Unfortunately, there are no medicines to cure a cold or the flu, but there are over-the-counter medicines and things you can do to relieve your child's cold and flu symptoms.

- Have them drink lots of clear fluids.
- Make sure they get plenty of rest.
- Children over 9 months old can be given Tylenol, Panadol, Tempra or generic non-aspirin pain relievers.

Call your doctor if:

- Your child is sick for more than a week.
- Your child has ear pain.
- Your child has a rash on the skin.
- Your child is wheezing.
- Your child has a swollen neck and a sore throat.

It's getting colder outside! Is your home and family safe from fire this winter?

Most home fires occur during the cold weather months, when fireplaces and space heaters are used. More than half of home fires happen at night.

The most important thing you can do to protect your family in case of fire is to install a smoke alarm. There should be at least one smoke alarm on every floor of the house and one near the bedrooms. Install them on the wall close to the ceiling because smoke rises.

Test the smoke alarms in your home once a month and replace the batteries twice a year. Replace smoke alarms after 10 years, even if they still seem to be working. If you live in an apartment, your landlord should replace the smoke alarms for you.

It's best to make an escape plan so your family knows where to go in case of a fire. Practice your escape plan at least twice a year with your family. Teach your children to

crawl under the smoke and feel each door before opening it. If the door is hot, do not try to open it and get out. Use a different way out, through another door or window.

Plan a spot where your family should meet that is away from your house. Everyone should know to leave the house when the smoke alarm sounds. Do not try to go back into the house once you have left. Call 911 from a neighbor's house.

Choosing toys for children: How to find the right toy for a child's age

The holidays are quickly approaching and parents are always looking for fun, but safe toys to buy for their children. Here are a few tips to help you and the grandparents out.

Infants (younger than 1 year old)

Infants play and learn by touching and using their eyes and mouths. Some suggestions for toys are:

- Soft animals, squeaky toys, chew toys, light-up balls and rattles
- Wind-up toys and bath toys
- Soft books or cardboard books
- Toys with bright colors and smooth edges
- Toys should be easy to clean or wash.
- Avoid toys with strings that can wrap around a baby's neck.

Toddlers (1 to 2 years old)

Toddlers are beginning to put things together. Look for toys that you and your toddler can play with:

- Solid wood blocks of different sizes
- Push and pull toys
- Lightweight balls at least 3 inches across

- Pounding toys and blocks
- Picture books
- Toys for a toddler should not have parts that could break off and become a choking hazard.
- Toys with sharp points or edges, marbles, toys with strings, cords or ribbons can be deadly to a toddler.
- Do not buy battery-operated toys yet. Small, round batteries can choke a child. Batteries are also poisonous.
- A good rule of thumb is that if the object can fit inside a toilet paper tube, then a child can choke on it.

Preschoolers (3 to 4 years old)

Preschoolers are learning fine motor skills and are beginning to be creative in their play and stories. These toys will help them develop:

- Riding toys
- Hand puppets
- Counting toys
- Art supplies, board games
- Lightweight soft baseball and bat
- Dolls

School-aged children (6 to 10 years old)

School-aged children like toys they can play with their friends and that challenge their imaginations and hand- coordination:

- Action figures
- Board games
- Sports equipment and protective gear
- Handheld electronic games
- Bikes, scooters and skateboards. Don't forget the bike helmet!

Keep playtime safe and fun

Whatever age of the child, be alert to keep play safe. Follow these tips to keep your child safe while playing with toys:

- Always watch children while they are playing.
- Be sure that children use toys in a safe environment.
- Make sure children wear the right protective equipment when riding bikes, scooters or skateboards.
- Teach children to put toys away after playing. This helps keep older children's toys out of the hands of younger children.

Safe sleeping: Sleeping with your baby is dangerous

The picture of a parent and baby sleeping together is not an uncommon one. But the practice of co-sleeping— or sharing a bed with your baby—can be dangerous for your baby.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics warns parents not to place their babies to sleep in adult beds.

Babies are at risk of suffocation and strangulation in adult beds. For example:

- Babies can suffocate from an adult rolling on top of or next to a baby.
- Babies can suffocate when they get trapped or wedged between a mattress and headboard, nightstand, wall or other object.
- Babies can suffocate if they are face-down on a waterbed, a regular mattress or on soft bedding, like pillows, blankets or quilts.
- Babies can be strangled in a headboard or footboard.

If you prefer to have the baby close by while you sleep, you might consider a bassinet, cradle or portable play yard that meets industry standards.

Also, it is important that your baby not share the bed with other children or with adults who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs because they may not know the baby is in the bed with them.

Remember:

- Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep.
- Always leave your baby's head uncovered while sleeping.
- Don't place a baby to sleep in an adult bed alone.
- The safest place to put a baby to sleep is in a crib that meets current standards and has no soft bedding.

From: KidsHealth.org

Quick Tips: Protecting your home from fire

Here are more tips to keep your home from catching on fire:

- Use extension cords sparingly.
- Put no-shock childproof covers on electrical outlets.
- Do not overload outlets or surge protectors.
- Replace frayed cords.
- Run cords along walls, not under carpeting or rugs.
- Keep paper, kindling and other flammable material away from the fireplace and space heaters.
- Never use the stove to heat your home.
- Keep curtains, rugs, blankets, newspapers and magazines away from space heaters.
- Use space heaters that automatically turn off when overturned.
- Do not use space heaters near cribs.