



### What causes a runny nose during a cold?

When viruses that cause colds first infect the nose and sinuses, the nose produces clear mucus. This helps wash germs from the nose and sinuses. After two or three days, the body's immune system fights back, changing the mucus to a white or yellow color. This is normal, and does not mean that the infection is getting worse or that you need antibiotics.

### How is a cold treated?

The best treatment is lots of rest and plenty of fluids. This helps your body fight the virus. Unfortunately, antibiotics only kill bacteria, so they won't make you feel better any faster when you have a cold.

### Why not take antibiotics now?

The symptoms of a cold will get better by themselves, so it's best to take antibiotics only if they are needed. Unnecessary antibiotics may be harmful. Each time you take them, you are more likely to develop germs (bacteria) that are resistant to antibiotics. If you develop an infection caused by resistant bacteria, you may end up with a more severe illness, need more expensive medication, or even need to get antibiotics in the hospital.

### What should I do?

To keep from spreading your cold to others, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue before you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your arm instead of your hands. Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and water. You can also do several things to help yourself feel better:

- Drink plenty of liquids and get lots of rest,
- Breathe steam from a shower or bath to loosen mucus,
- Avoid cigarette smoke.
- If necessary, take acetaminophen (like Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (like Advil® or Motrin®) as needed for fever or pain,
- Take decongestants to relieve your cold symptoms.