



What causes a runny nose during a cold?

When germs 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 cells fight back, changing the mucus to a white or yellow color. This is normal, and does not mean your child is infected with bacteria that need treatment with antibiotics.

How is a runny nose treated?

The best treatment is watchful waiting. A runny nose, cough, and symptoms like fever, headache, and muscle aches are unpleasant, but antibiotics will not make them go away sooner. Some people find that using a cool mist vaporizer or taking a decongestant makes them feel better.

Are antibiotics ever needed for a runny nose?

Only if your doctor diagnoses sinusitis, which usually only happens if your child still has a fever or isn't getting any better after 10-14 days.

Why not take antibiotics now?

They won't help your child's symptoms, and unnecessary antibiotics may be harmful. After each course of antibiotics, children are more likely to carry resistant germs in their noses. If they get infected with resistant germs, they may need more expensive antibiotics or have to get antibiotics in the hospital. Since a runny nose generally gets better on its own, it is best to wait and take antibiotics only if needed.

What should I do?

Several things can help your child feel better:

- Getting lots of rest,
- Drinking plenty of liquids,
- Breathing steam from a shower or bath to loosen mucus,
- Taking decongestants to relieve cold symptoms, and taking acetaminophen (like Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (like Advil® or Motrin®) as needed for fever or pain (check with your child's health care provider first).