

# Colds

PATIENT  
INFORMATION

Colds are infections almost always caused by viruses. Colds can feel uncomfortable but they often clear up on their own. You can do many things to alleviate your symptoms.

## What are colds?

When you have a cold, you may have a runny nose, a cough and a sore throat, and feel tired. Sometimes you may develop a fever. Colds are common, especially in children but also in adults. You may catch a cold several times a year.

A cold can feel uncomfortable. It usually lasts for one or two weeks, but it may take even longer before you feel completely well again. Coughs may persist for a few weeks.

## What you can do

An infection can make you tired. You may need to take it easy and rest, especially if you also have a fever.

- If you have a cough or blocked nose, sleeping with your head raised up on an extra pillow can provide relief.
- For some people, hot or cold drinks can help soothe a sore throat. Following a liquid diet for a few days can also make it easier to eat properly.
- Over-the-counter medications containing paracetamol or ibuprofen can also alleviate pain and fever.
- A hot drink may provide relief if you have a cough. It can also help loosen phlegm.

- Nasal spray may help if you have a blocked nose. Use it for a maximum of ten days.

You can ask your pharmacist about what else you can do to relieve the symptoms. They can tell you which products are suitable for children of different ages. You can also get medical advice by calling 1177.

Smoking makes symptoms worse and increases your risk of being affected again.

Colds are highly contagious, so make sure you wash your hands, and cough and sneeze into your elbow.

## What should you be aware of?

The symptoms usually go away on their own. Please contact your healthcare provider again if

- your symptoms get worse, for example if you develop a high fever and feel very unwell
- you have a high fever for more than four days.

Always contact your healthcare provider if you suspect that you or someone close to you is seriously ill with an infection.

PLEASE TURN OVER... ➤



Folkhälsomyndigheten

Strama

## Do antibiotics help if you have a cold?

No, antibiotics do not help against cold viruses. Sometimes, a cold can be followed quickly by another new infection. Most common infections clear up by themselves.

## Are there any disadvantages to antibiotics?

Antibiotics are important medications needed for a number of bacterial infections. They must only be taken when there is a clear benefit, as antibiotics also have disadvantages. Antibiotics also kill the 'good' bacteria in your body. Antibiotics can cause side effects, such as diarrhoea and rashes/hives.

The more antibiotics are used in society, the bigger the risk of bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics and more difficult to treat. This is another reason why antibiotics must only be used when there is a benefit.

### Notes

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Call **1177** if you need medical advice. They will help you assess the symptoms or tell you where you can go for treatment. You can also visit **[www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se)**

This information was produced by the Public Health Agency of Sweden and Strama, the Swedish strategic programme against antibiotic resistance. The fact sheet is part of the Antibiotic Smart Sweden initiative. The information applies to the expected progression of common infections. The fact sheet can be downloaded in Swedish and several other languages from [www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/patinfo-forkylning](http://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/patinfo-forkylning)

