

# Coughs, colds and flu

## Not usually serious

You will probably find when your child starts mixing with other children they get lots of coughs, colds and sniffles. There are some good things about this though as it helps the body build up a natural immune system. If your baby is under three months and has a cough, take them to your GP who may check them for whooping cough. Young babies do not always make the characteristic whooping cough sound.

Flu can be more serious than a cold and leave your child feeling quite unwell. Flu tends to come on more suddenly and severely than a cold. Your child may have aching limbs and feel uncomfortable, and be ill for a week or more. Coughing at night may keep them awake. Children under six months should not be given over-the-counter cough and cold medicine unless prescribed by your GP or pharmacist.

Most viruses will run their course without doing any real harm because they will get better on their own. An annual nasal spray flu vaccine is available from the age of two as part of the NHS Childhood Vaccination Programme. Ask your GP or pharmacist for details.

### Things you can do at home to help:

- Give your child lots to drink.
- Try sugar-free paracetamol or ibuprofen (not aspirin) (see ‘know the basics’).
- Keep them away from smoke and anyone who smokes.
- Talk to your pharmacist but remember that coughing is the body’s way of keeping the lungs clear.
- Make sure they get plenty of sleep/rest.

### Contact your GP if:

- Your baby has a persistent temperature of **38°C** (fever) or more.
- They are drowsy and less interactive.
- Your child is finding it hard to breathe.
- Persistent temperature does not respond to medicine (see ‘fever’).

### Pharmacist says

Children can be treated using over-the-counter medicines to bring down a raised temperature if it is causing distress. Sugar-free paracetamol or ibuprofen liquid can help and can be given from the age of about three months. Check the label carefully. If in doubt, check with the pharmacist and tell them how old your child is.

Flu symptoms are more severe and you may need to see your GP.

## Flu prevention

An annual nasal spray flu vaccine is available free from the age of two as part of the NHS Childhood Vaccination Programme. Children aged two, three and four years can be given the vaccination at their GP surgery usually by the practice nurse.

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/child-flu-vaccine.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/child-flu-vaccine.aspx)

Contact your GP practice for more information.

## Don't pass it on:

**Catch it** Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch coughs or sneezes.

**Bin it** Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.

**Kill it** Hands can pass on germs to everything you touch. Wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you can.

**1**

My child keeps coughing and sneezing, has a mild temperature and seems generally unwell.

**2**

Have they recently started nursery? Catching colds is very common. Have you spoken to your pharmacist about sugar-free paracetamol and cough medicines?

**3**

If symptoms last for more than 10 days or your child is coughing up yellow 'goo' they may have a bacterial infection. Contact your GP.