

# Relieve the symptoms of a common cold

## How to help clear mucus, blocked sinuses or runny nose

The best treatment for your child is to rest and relieve the symptoms. Common colds usually last 5 – 7 days and a cough can last an additional 2 weeks.

If your child is experiencing blocked sinuses or a runny nose you may find the following advice useful:

- **Saline (salt water) sprays or drops for the nose** can help clear mucus.
- **Inhale steam from a shower.** Steam from a bowl of hot water can burn the lining of a child's nose and the hot water can be spilled. Only allow children to inhale steam from a shower.
- **Decongestants** for the nose can help dry a runny nose or relieve blocked sinuses. These are available as drops, sprays for the nose, tablets or a liquid. Check the label to see if it is safe for your child to use a decongestant and ask your pharmacist.
  - Children under 2 years old should avoid using oral decongestants
  - Children over 6 months old can use some decongestant nose drops or sprays
  - Children under 6 months old should generally avoid all decongestant products, whether given by mouth or as nose drops or spray
  - Do not use decongestant nose drops or sprays for more than five days; using them for longer can make congestion worse.
  - Do not use some decongestant products if you are pregnant or breast feeding, are being treated for high blood pressure, or have heart problems, glaucoma, or some other medical conditions; read the label and ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

Use an **ointment** to soothe dry and chapped skin around your nose.

Common colds need common sense, they don't need antibiotics. Antibiotics work on bacteria, not on the viruses which cause common colds.

See your doctor if you are concerned about your child's health. For more information, go to the 'parents and carers' page of the common colds section of the NPS website at [www.nps.org.au/consumers](http://www.nps.org.au/consumers)



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