

WHAT IS THE COMMON COLD?

The common cold is caused by many different viruses that affect the nose and throat. It is the most common infectious illness, especially for young children. Young children may have 8 to 10 colds each year, with the highest number usually being during the first two years in child care, kindergarten or school.

A cold in itself is not serious but colds can sometimes lead to other infections such as ear infections and tonsillitis. Symptoms include runny, stuffed up nose, sneezing, coughing and a mild sore throat, with little or no fever.

Nasal discharge is usually clear to start with, and then within a day can become thicker, yellow and sometimes green.

Up to a quarter of young children with a cold go on to have an ear infection as well, but this happens less often as the child grows older.

Colds are spread directly by contact with airborne droplets (coughing and sneezing), or indirectly by contaminated hands, tissues, eating utensils, toys or other articles freshly soiled by the nose and throat discharges of an infected person.

Infectious period

2-4 days after the cold starts.

Ref: NSW Health.

Controlling the spread of infection

The most important ways to break the chain of infection and stop the spread of diseases are:

- Effective hand hygiene
- Exclusion of ill children, educators and other staff

Other strategies include:

- Cough and sneeze etiquette
- Appropriate use of gloves
- Effective environmental cleaning

Treatment

No specific treatment. Rest, extra drinks and comforting are important. Decongestants and other cold remedies are widely promoted for the relief of symptoms of colds and flu, however, there is little evidence that any of these help. In fact, there may be evidence that they can be harmful and may cause unpleasant side effects such as irritability, confusion and sleepiness. Oral decongestants and cough medicines are not recommended for children under the age of 2 years, additionally, cough medicines are not effective in reducing the frequency, intensity or duration of cough. Like fever, the cough is there for a reason –it serves a useful function in clearing mucus from the child's airways and preventing a secondary infection. If concerned, take children to the doctor. **Do not give aspirin to any child with a fever.**

Responsibilities of parents and Carers

The child should stay at home until they are feeling well.

Children who are unwell should stay home from education and care services. Even if they do not have a condition that requires exclusion, the best place for an ill child to rest and recover is with someone who cares for them.

Difference between Croup and Whooping Cough

Croup and whooping cough are both infections that are common in children and it is a common misconception in most people that both are the same. Many people use both the terms interchangeably but it's worth noting that they are indeed different. The thing is that it's not very easy to tell the difference without an examination i.e. only by analyzing the symptoms. Before talking about the difference, it is better to know the symptoms of both.

Both coughs are characterized by very harsh sounding coughing, often accompanied by wheezing in the chest or noisy breath. Croup is due to a viral infection that results in the inflammation of the windpipe tissue. The narrowing of the windpipe results in a tight and barking sound to the cough. Since it is viral infection there isn't any proper vaccination against it. Whooping cough on the other hand is a bacterial infection caused by the Pertussis bacteria. Whooping is characterized by continuous coughing till the lungs are emptied and then inhalation with a 'whoop' sound or gasp. This is where the primary difference can be noticed between the two: the sound. Croup is hoarse seal-like bark whereas whooping cough has a high pitched gasping sound.

Plus most children show mild symptoms of croup. Whooping is much worse, and very painful. Very severe croup can sound like that, but it's rare. Very young infants often don't do the whoop. Instead they just stop breathing and turn blue, which is dangerous. Another thing that is common in whooping cough is that bouts of cough may end in vomits, which doesn't happen in croup.

The good thing is that there is a vaccination available for Pertussis - the DTAP vaccine - which drastically reduces the chances of getting the infection. So if your child got the DTAP shot, the probability of whooping is very low. But if you haven't got him the DTAP, you need to be worried. In any case, if there is fever, you definitely need to go see a doctor. Croup is not as dangerous as whooping cough, which can and has killed many little innocents. **Please if you have any doubt, consult a doctor.** (Ref: NSW Health).

Whooping Cough



1 IDENTIFY

The infection can be deadly in babies but anyone can get whooping cough

- Babies and young children can stop breathing or develop severe coughing bouts that end with vomiting or gasping for breath.
- People of all ages can get whooping cough and can spread it to babies.
- Adults often just have a mild cough that lingers.



2 PROTECT

Immunise your baby on time to get the best protection

- Keep anyone with a cough away from your newborn especially until your baby has had 3 whooping cough vaccines.
- Booster vaccines for children and adults stop whooping cough spreading to babies.
- Immunity fades. You can still get whooping cough, even if you've been immunised.



3 PREVENT

Whooping cough spreads quickly when people cough in the early stages of the infection

- If you have symptoms, see a doctor fast and get tested.
- Early detection and early treatment prevents spread to others.
- Stay home until no longer infectious. Ask your doctor when it's safe to return to work, school or childcare.

For further information
visit the NSW Health website www.health.nsw.gov.au



REFERENCES

Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council: *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*. Fifth Ed. (2012).

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/ch43.pdf>

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<http://croup-cough.info/difference-between-croup-and-whooping-cough/>

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