# How long does a viral respiratory tract infection usually last?

**Colds usually get better in 7-10 days, and most coughs will have resolved by 3 weeks after the initial infection has passed**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Infection Type*** | ***Usually lasts for:*** |
| Ear Infection | **4 days** |
| Sore Throat | **1 week** |
| Common Cold | **1 week** |
| Sinusitis | **2 ½ weeks** |
| Cough | **3 weeks** |

# What else do I need to know?

* **If your infection gets worse or lasts longer than expected you should see a doctor.**
* **For more information call Health line on 0800 611 116**
* **In an emergency call 111**

# When should you or your child see your doctor?

* **If your temperature is above 38.5°C**
* **Shortness of breath, noisy or fast breathing**
* **Neck stiffness**
* **Severe headache**
* **Light hurting the eyes**
* **Chest pain**
* **Difficulty waking up or unusual drowsiness**
* **A skin rash**
* **Vomiting**
* **Persistent cough**
* **Aching muscles**
* **An existing condition is worsening**



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# Coughs and Colds

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## This advice is for people who have an uncomplicated cough or cold caused by a virus.

[](http://www.google.co.nz/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjc6vWqwsfaAhWLf7wKHaXEAPQQjRx6BAgAEAU&url=http://worldartsme.com/cough-and-cold-clipart.html&psig=AOvVaw1e9gBFDGbMJTFUZRWHXXgJ&ust=1524267821707029)

**Colds are viral infections of the respiratory tract that cause symptoms such as sneezing, a blocked or runny nose, sinusitis, ear infections, a sore throat and coughing.**

**Antibiotics do NOT help with viral coughs, colds or flu**

**If you have a cold thought to be caused by a virus you should not be offered an antibiotic.**

# What can be done for coughs and colds?

* **Drink plenty fluids and have plenty of rest**
* **Some medicines can help relieve the symptoms of a cold, ask your pharmacist for advice**
* **There is no robust evidence that vitamins, minerals or herbal medicines can treat colds, although zinc may reduce the severity and shorten the length of a cold for some people.**

# To relieve blocked or runny nose you can try:

* **Salt water (saline) sprays or drops to clear mucus**
* **Inhale the steam from a running shower**
* **Decongestants to help relieve blocked noses**

# To relieve a sore throat or cough:

* **Gargle warm salty water**
* **Suck ice or a throat lozenge**

# Stop the spread of colds by:

* **Regularly washing your hands and ensuring anyone you have contact with also washes their hands**
* **to avoid spreading your cold to others**
* **Stay at home to avoid spreading your cold to others**
* **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when you sneeze or cough – avoid using your hands for this**
* **Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth when unwell**

# What about the flu?

* **The flu is caused by a different virus to a cold**
* **The flu tends to affect the whole body whereas a cold usually affects the nose and throat.**
* **A flu vaccine can prevent you getting the flu caused by the strains of virus in the vaccine but will not prevent you from getting colds.**

# Will antibiotics help a cold, flu or cough?

**Colds, flu and most coughs are caused by viruses - antibiotics won’t help.**

[](http://www.google.co.nz/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjNy5C3w8faAhVIV7wKHfoXC-gQjRx6BAgAEAU&url=http://www.illustrationsof.com/kleenex-clipart&psig=AOvVaw0zYAW5Fm4Uy0eIF5bmqS_q&ust=1524268124942557)