



Associate Professor Dr Erwin J Khoo
Consultant Paediatrician



WHEN YOUR KID HAS A **COLD, COUGH, OR FEVER**

Nursing a child back to good health from colds, cough and fever is part and parcel of parenting. Consultant paediatrician Dr Erwin Khoo Jiayuan shares some tips on how to keep those cold symptoms in check.

COLD

Common colds are caused by viruses that infect the upper respiratory tract (the nose, sinuses and throat). Symptoms can vary with your child's age and the type of virus causing the infection. Common symptoms include:

- Sneezing
- Nasal congestion and discharge (rhinorrhoea)
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Low-grade fever
- Headaches
- Malaise (discomfort)

In infants, common additional symptoms include:

- Fussiness
- Difficulty feeding
- Decreased appetite
- Difficulty sleeping

HOW OFTEN WILL A CHILD CATCH COLD?

- Children younger than 6 years old have an average of 6 to 8 colds per year, with symptoms lasting for up to 14 days.
- Older children have an average of 2 to 4 colds per year, with symptom that typically last for 5 to 7 days.

What home remedies would you recommend to ease my child's cold symptoms?

Keeping your child hydrated throughout the day may help to thin mucus secretions (such as nasal discharge) and soothe the throat.

Serving **warm liquids** such as chicken soup will help soothe the throat, ease the flow of nasal mucus,

and loosen respiratory secretions, making them easier to remove.

Topical saline (a mixture of salt and water) applied to the nasal cavity can help flush out mucus and help with decongestion. In older children, a saline nasal spray or a syringe may be used for nasal irrigation. In infants, topical saline is usually applied with saline nose drops and a bulb syringe.

COUGH

A cough is an important reflex that helps clear the body's airways of mucus and irritants such as dust. It helps keep people from breathing things into the airways that could cause problems.

It is normal for children to cough occasionally. But sometimes, a cough could be a symptom of an illness. The common causes of cough in children are:

- Infections of the airways or lungs (including the common cold)
- Having an object stuck in an airway
- Asthma
- Coughing out of habit

What can I do to help ease my child's cough?

If your child's cough is caused by a cold, the croup (a respiratory infection caused by a virus), or any another infection, you can:

- Have your child drink lots of fluids
- Use a humidifier in your child's bedroom, especially if the environment is dry
- If your child is over one year old, you may give your child 2.5 to 5ml (half to 1 teaspoon) of honey, served straight or diluted in water or juice

For children older than 6 years old and there is no risk of choking, hard candy or lozenges can be an option for alleviating cough. Cough lozenges are known to help coat irritated throats by stimulating saliva production.



FEVER

A fever is a rise in body temperature that goes above 38°C.

When measuring your child's temperature, you might get slightly different readings depending on how you take the temperature—it could be via oral (mouth), armpit, ear, forehead, or rectum.

Armpit, ear, and forehead temperatures are easier to measure than rectal or oral temperatures. However, they are not as accurate.

The most accurate way is to take a rectal temperature. Oral temperatures are also reliable for children who are older than 4 years old.

What can I do to help lower my child's fever at home?

That depends on what the fever is caused by. In most cases, medicines such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help bring down a fever—consult a paediatrician or pharmacist to make sure the medicine is appropriate for your child's age.

You can also:

- Offer your child lots of fluids to drink.
- Encourage your child to rest as much as he or she wants but avoid forcing your child to sleep or rest.
- Some parents may choose to give their children sponge baths with lukewarm water.

If you are unsure of how to handle your child's symptoms, or if you feel that something is 'just not right', bring your child to a doctor.

HOW TO TAKE YOUR KID'S TEMPERATURE

BY MOUTH

1. Wait at least 30 minutes after your child has eaten or drunk anything.
2. Wash the thermometer with cool water and soap.
3. Place the tip of the thermometer under your child's tongue (toward the back). Ask your child to hold the thermometer with his or her lips, not teeth.
4. Have your child keep their lips sealed around the thermometer. A glass thermometer takes about 3 minutes to work, while most digital thermometers take less than 1 minute.