




Coughs and colds are extremely common in young children. Over the first year of life, your child is likely to have up to 8 of these episodes.

- Coughing is the body's natural way of clearing infection
- Most of these are likely to be caused by a virus, which means that antibiotics are of no benefit (and may actually result in side effects such as rash and diarrhoea, as well as increasing the risk of them developing antibiotic resistance)
- Having green snot or a noisy chest does not mean that your child has an infection requiring antibiotics
- It can sometimes be harder to identify the cause of a cough. In general, if it is associated with a runny nose, red eyes, ear pain or a wheeze, it is far more likely to be viral. Noisy chests are also common in young children with viral infections
- Coughing can wake a child in the night but does not mean the illness is more severe
- Children requiring antibiotics usually appear more unwell, with difficulty breathing, drowsiness, cold hands and feet and possibly blue lips - seek urgent medical attention if any of these features are present


### If your child has any of the following:

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- Breathing very fast or breathing that stops or pauses
  - Working hard to breathe, drawing in of the muscles below the rib, unable to talk or noisy breathing (grunting)
  - A harsh breath noise as they breathe in (stridor) present all of the time (even when they are not upset)
  - Becomes pale, blue, mottled and/or unusually cold to touch
  - Difficult to wake up, very sleepy or confused
  - Weak, high-pitched, continuous cry or extremely agitated
  - Has a fit (seizure)
  - A temperature less than 36°C or temperature 38°C or more if baby is less than 3 months
  - Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure and seems unwell (see the 'Glass Test')

### You need urgent help.

Go to the nearest Hospital Emergency (A&E) Department or phone 999


### If your child has any of the following:

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- Breathing a bit faster than normal or working a bit harder to breathe
  - Noisy breathing (stridor) only when upset
  - Dry skin, lips, tongue or looking pale
  - Not had a wee or wet nappy in last 12 hours
  - Sleepy or not responding normally
  - Crying and unsettled
  - Poor feeding (babies) or not drinking (children)
  - A temperature 39°C or above in babies 3-6 months
  - Temperature of 38°C or above for more than 5 days or shivering with fever (rigors)
  - Getting worse or you are worried about them

### You need to contact a doctor or nurse today

Please ring your GP surgery or call NHS 111 - dial 111

### If your child has none of the above:



Watch them closely for any change and look out for any red or amber symptoms

### Self care

Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your child, call NHS 111 – dial 111



### What should you do?

Keep your child well hydrated by offering them lots of fluids

Most children with coughs/colds do not require treatment with antibiotics. Antibiotics rarely speed up recovery and often cause side effects such as rash and diarrhoea. They will also promote the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria in your child

Try children's paracetamol and/or ibuprofen - cough syrup does not tend to help with coughs

Try using saline nose drops or spray if your baby has a blocked nose

For children over 1 year, a spoon of honey (perhaps in a warm drink) half an hour before bed may help them to wake less often in the night

For children over 2 years, vapour rubs (containing camphor, menthol and/or eucalyptus) may help children sleep better

### How long will your child's symptoms last?

Unfortunately, coughs and colds can continue for weeks before they get better. In addition, over the winter, children are likely to get one viral infection after another, which can make you think that they are never well. Things will get better in the summer months!

Having a cough for 2 or 3 weeks does not mean that your child needs antibiotics

Children under 2 years of age with breathing difficulty may have bronchiolitis. This is an extremely common condition that usually starts as a runny nose and cough but their breathing may get worse over the next 2-3 days

If your child is struggling to breath, they need to be seen urgently by a medical practitioner and are likely to need treatment. If your child has croup (hoarse voice, barking cough, noisy breathing), they will also need to be seen by a medical practitioner