

COUGH AND COLDS

Coughing is a reflex that keeps your throat and airways clear. Although it can be annoying, coughing helps your body heal or protect itself. Coughs can be either acute or chronic. Acute coughs begin suddenly and usually last no more than 2 to 3 weeks. Acute coughs are the kind you most often get with a cold or flu. Chronic coughs last longer than 2 to 3 weeks. Causes of **chronic cough** include

- **Asthma**
- **Allergies**
- **Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)**

Most colds are caused by a virus and are usually not serious. Common cold symptoms are: runny nose, sore throat and cough that can last from two days to two weeks. Fever and headache may also accompany a cold. Influenza (sometimes called "flu") is also caused by viruses. Symptoms include high fever, chills, coughing, headache, and muscle aches. Children with influenza may feel too ill to attend school.

Children may catch as many as 7 - 8 colds each year. Viruses are transmitted from one person to another through respiratory secretions - tears, saliva, mucus, and phlegm. Infected droplets are scattered through sneezing, talking, or coughing. Even if they are not inhaled directly, they can land on surfaces touched by others, who then become infected by touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. **People with colds and flu are most infectious in the 24 hours before their symptoms start** and stay infectious as long as they are sick. Anyone with a high fever, persistent cough, earache, or symptoms that continue without improvement for several days should contact their health care provider for advice. A bacterial infection requires antibiotic treatment.

Hand washing and cleanliness are essential in reducing the spread of all respiratory tract diseases.

CHILDREN with viral illnesses, especially influenza or chickenpox symptoms, SHOULD NEVER BE GIVEN ASPIRIN (or products containing salicylate) because of the link with Reye syndrome (vomiting, liver problems, or coma can result).