

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Despite your best efforts, your child is likely to get a **cold**. A cold is a mild infection of the upper respiratory system caused by a virus. There are many different types of viruses, which may cause a cold. Many young children will have between 5–6 colds per year.

What are the symptoms of a cold?

Symptoms can include runny and stuffy nose, coughing, sneezing, sore throat, mild fever, swollen glands, and stuffy or congested ears. A cold may last up to two weeks. Green mucous is common in the healing stages of a cold and does not indicate a need for antibiotics. Colds and flu can be mistaken for each other, but there are significant differences. Cold symptoms usually develop slowly and fever is rare. Body aches, headaches and pain are usually mild with colds but flu symptoms can be severe. A yearly flu vaccine is recommended for children and adults.

How are colds spread?

Colds are easily spread from person-to-person through the air by coughing or sneezing. Surfaces and hands contaminated with mucus and saliva may also spread cold viruses.

How is a cold treated?

There is no cure for the common cold. Colds rarely require medical treatment and antibiotics are not effective against colds. Getting enough rest and drinking plenty of fluids is generally recommended.

How do you control the spread?

- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water – antibacterial soap is not necessary
- Teach children to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue or their arm when coughing or sneezing
- Wash hands well afterward using a tissue
- Avoid touching the eyes, mouth, or nose
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces
- Exclusion of children with colds from school and childcare is generally not necessary
- If the child is too sick to take part in normal activities, they should be kept at home

How do I get more information?

For more information about the common cold, contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press “0”.