

Understanding your child's runny nose that just won't go away

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Toddlers with runny noses are a common sight, but for many parents it

may feel like this symptom never goes away. An expert with Baylor College of Medicine shares what you need to know about your child's seemingly perpetual nasal drip.

"Children under six years of age average six to eight colds per year, with symptoms lasting an average of 14 days," said Dr. Maria Mejia, associate professor of family and [community medicine](#) at Baylor. "It's very normal for children to contract illnesses frequently as their immune systems build."

Children enrolled in daycare or other forms of care are exposed to different pathogens, viruses and bacteria that their less developed immune systems cannot fight off. Because of this, it is very common for children to get sick often, especially with the common cold. These colds occur most often between September and April, which also falls in line with the changing of the seasons.

"A general rule of thumb is that if your child gets better after a week to 10 days, it was most likely a cold," said Mejia. "If their symptoms persist longer and/or seem to come on after exposure to certain substances or during seasonal changes, allergies are probably to blame."

If that's the case, Mejia says [primary care providers](#) often recommend taking children to an allergist or an ear, nose and throat specialist for further diagnosis and treatment plans.

If children are presenting with the following symptoms, Mejia advises immediately seeking help from their health care provider:

- Refusing to drink anything for a prolonged period.
- Behavior changes, including irritability or lethargy (decreased responsiveness).
- Difficulty breathing, working hard to breathe or breathing

rapidly

- Fever greater than 101°F that lasts more than three days
- Eyes become red or develop yellow discharge
- Signs or symptoms of an ear infection (pain, ear pulling, fussiness)

Although children's immune systems are still developing, Mejia reminds parents of the following tips to best teach their children [healthy habits](#) that can help prevent sickness:

- Practicing proper handwashing. Teach children how to properly wash their hands frequently after using the restroom. As they get older, encourage them to wash their hands after blowing or touching their nose. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable.
- Stay up to date on flu, COVID-19 and all other vaccinations.
- Make sure they cover their mouths while coughing. This can help prevent spread at school or daycare. Tell children to be like Dracula as they sneeze or cough into their elbow.
- Eat healthy meals and drink plenty of water. Make sure children are getting the nutrition they need with a variety of meals and snacks full of fruits and vegetables so they can get the vitamins and minerals needed to help boost their immune systems.
- Make sure [children](#) are getting plenty of sleep to help them stay well and healthy.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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