

Cold Care Cheat Sheet

Rest, fluids, symptom relief, and time. Skip the antibiotic.

Educational only, not medical advice.



Colds are caused by viruses, and **rhinoviruses are the most frequent cause**.¹ Adults average **two to three colds a year**, and children often have more.¹ Colds usually last **less than a week**, and most get better on their own with time.^{1,2}

ANTIBIOTICS DON'T TREAT VIRUSES

What actually helps

- ☐ **Skip the antibiotic.** Antibiotics don't work against viruses and won't help you feel better. They can also cause side effects.²
- ☐ **Rest and drink plenty of fluids.** Simple basics while your body fights it off.²
- ☐ **Ease the symptoms.** A clean humidifier, saline nasal spray or drops, steam, and lozenges or cough drops can help. Honey can ease cough for anyone age 1 and older.²
- ☐ **Kids need special care.** No OTC cough and cold medicines under age 6. No lozenges under age 4. No honey under age 1. Ask about the right fever medicine dose.²
- ☐ **Wash hands and clean surfaces.** Cold viruses can spread when you touch a contaminated surface, then your eyes, nose, or mouth.¹

Red flags: when to get checked

CDC: Seek medical care if you or your child has **trouble breathing or fast breathing, dehydration, fever lasting longer than 4 days, symptoms lasting more than 10 days without getting better, or symptoms that improve then return or worsen**.²

Dr. Jocko's ER guidance: If you're struggling to breathe, call 911. That's when I want you to get help.

Sources

1. CDC, About Common Cold (Feb 19, 2026): [cdc.gov/common-cold/about/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/common-cold/about/index.html)
 2. CDC, Manage Common Cold (Mar 11, 2026): [cdc.gov/common-cold/treatment/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/common-cold/treatment/index.html)
- Call 911 line: Dr. Jocko's ER guidance. All accessed Oct 19, 2026.