



What's with these cold symptoms that have been dragging on for months?!?!

This is the time of year when we pediatricians talk with many patients and their families about cold symptoms and how they seem to drag on and on. In fact, studies show that the typical cold lasts for almost 2 weeks. The fever and sore throat are usually gone by a week out, but there's good evidence that the cough and runny nose will hang on until about 12 or 14 days. This is a surprise to many families who think the cold symptoms should be gone by 2-3 days after the start. Many families also don't realize that patients are usually contagious from a day or so BEFORE symptoms come on, until a week or 2 into it. We usually tell families that children are contagious at least as long as their nose is running and they are coughing.

But what about the fact that it seems like my child's symptoms have been going on for many weeks without a break? Usually, the detail of the story is that the symptoms seemed to be getting better, and now they're worse again. This is typically from recurrent infections. The average child gets 6-8 colds per year. If you figure that there is a preponderance of those infections during the Winter months, and that they may last for 2 weeks each, you can easily see why it seems like they are sick for so long, especially as we get toward the end of the cold and flu season.

Obviously, what starts out as a simple cold can turn into something much more serious, and that's why it's important to have a pediatrician you can trust. Pneumonia, bronchiolitis, asthma exacerbations, and other problems can be triggered by a simple cold; not to mention ear infections and bacterial superinfections.

Seek attention from your child's pediatrician if your child has a cold and:

- feeding is going poorly
- your child seems to be in pain
- you can't console her
- she's less than 3 months old with a fever of 100.4 or greater
- she's more than 3 months old and she has a fever for more than 3 days or so
- symptoms aren't improved by about 2 weeks out
- rash
- any time you're worried that "she's just not acting right" or you think "it's more than just a cold"

Your pediatrician really is the best person to assess your child to see if she has something more than a cold. Remember: antibiotics do nothing for viral illnesses. In many cases, all you can do is get a big bowl of chicken soup and a box of tissues for your child. Often, that's the best medicine. Hang in there.... Winter ends soon.

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