Rhinitis

A runny nose is a normal part of a cold. When cold viruses infect your nose and throat, your body produces clear mucus. The mucus helps wash the viruses out of your nose as your body fights the infection. After two or three days, immune cells that attack the viruses start changing the mucus to a white or yellow color. Bacteria that normally live in your nose also get mixed in with the mucus and can change it to a greenish color.

Colds almost always clear up on their own. There are at least 200 different viruses that can cause a cold. Common symptoms are a runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, dry cough, headache and sore muscles. The average child has six colds a year. Adults have fewer. These viral infections can last a few days or as long as a few weeks. It is important to take care of yourself and get plenty of rest, because a cold can weaken your body. This can lead to other conditions like ear infections, bronchitis, and even bacterial infections.

Antibiotics don’t work against viral infections. Antibiotics don’t kill viruses, so they won’t make a cold or runny nose go away any faster. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you or your child by creating stronger germs. Over-the-counter medicines can help relieve the symptoms of a cold, such as runny nose. Talk with your health care provider about medicines that can help you feel better.

The best way to prevent viral infections is to wash your hands. Viruses are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with soap and warm water will help keep viruses from entering your body. Eat well, get plenty of sleep and exercise to keep your body strong and prevent colds. People who smoke are more likely to get colds, stay sick longer and have other problems, such as bronchitis. Children who are around tobacco smoke are more likely to get colds and have more serious problems, such as asthma.