

Ask 'Doctor D'

about colds & coughs



*Ask 'Doctor D' is your opportunity to put questions people often want answers to, but don't like to ask, to the Doctors based at St. Andrews.
(You can also drop your question in to Café Bliss in the high street if you prefer).*

What is a 'Common Cold'?

Common colds are produced by viruses, there are more than 200 strains causing a cold. these are more prevalent in the winter affecting the nose, throat and upper airways. They usually last about a week to 10 days as the body fights off infection. Colds in younger children tend to last longer.

Because there a number of viruses which can cause a cold, it's possible to have several colds, one after the other, as each one is caused by a different virus.

Symptoms of a cold include runny nose and sneezing and sore throat as the lining of the nose and throat, becomes inflamed producing more mucus.

How does a cold spread?

When you sneeze or cough, droplets containing the cold virus are launched into the air. These can then be spread to others by direct inhalation or through indirect contact such as door handles.

A person usually becomes contagious two to three days before their symptoms begin, and they remain contagious until all their symptoms have gone.

How can I treat a cold

You don't need antibiotics for a cold!

There is no cure for a cold but you can use over-the-counter remedies to relieve symptoms such as Paracetamol and or Ibuprofen. It is also important to drink lots of fluids especially if you have a fever.

The Doctor says I have a virus, but I have a cough?

The common cold or flu sometimes produces a dry cough, due to inflammation in your throat and upper airways. The brain detects this but identifies it as a foreign body and tries to remove it by coughing.

When should I See the Doctor?

- your symptoms persist for more than 3 weeks
- you have a temperature higher than 39°C (102.2°F)
- you cough up blood-stained phlegm (thick mucus)
- you feel chest pain
- you have breathing difficulties

How can I stop my cold spreading.

- cough or sneeze into tissues
- hand wash regularly
- clean surfaces regularly, including the telephone and key board
- use disposable paper towel to dry face and hands