



A GUIDE TO KICKING COUGHS AND COLDS INTO TOUCH

Including expert advice from Dr. Michael Dixon,
a practising GP and chair of the NHS Alliance

You are likely to catch between two and four colds every year and your children as many as eight! When everyone around you is coughing and spluttering, it might seem impossible to avoid catching a cold, but there are a few simple things you can do to help you and your family fend off the germs.



TRUE OR FALSE?

Going out with wet hair or not wearing a coat will give you a cold



False!

Despite their name, colds are actually caused by viruses not by changes in temperature

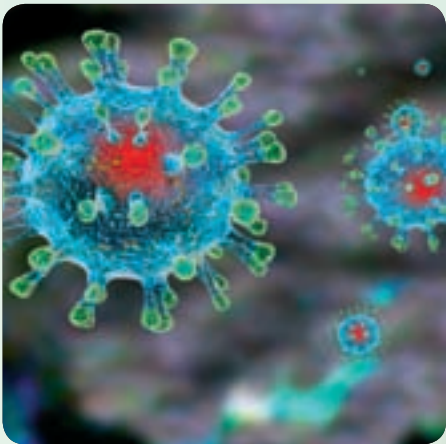


What causes a cold?

When someone with a cold sneezes or coughs, millions of germs are launched into the air, which can then land on you or surrounding surfaces helping colds to spread very quickly. Germs can also be easily transferred by hands - so be careful who you're shaking hands with!

There are as many as 200 different cold viruses capable of infecting the nose and throat in a human.

- Cold virus can enter the body through the mouth, nose and eyes
- Symptoms usually start two to three days after infection
- Colds cause the lining of nose and throat to become irritated and inflamed
- Symptoms include blocked or runny nose, sore throat, sneezing, coughing, high temperature, tiredness and headaches



DID YOU KNOW?

Around one in 20 colds develops into a secondary infection such as bronchitis or sinusitis.



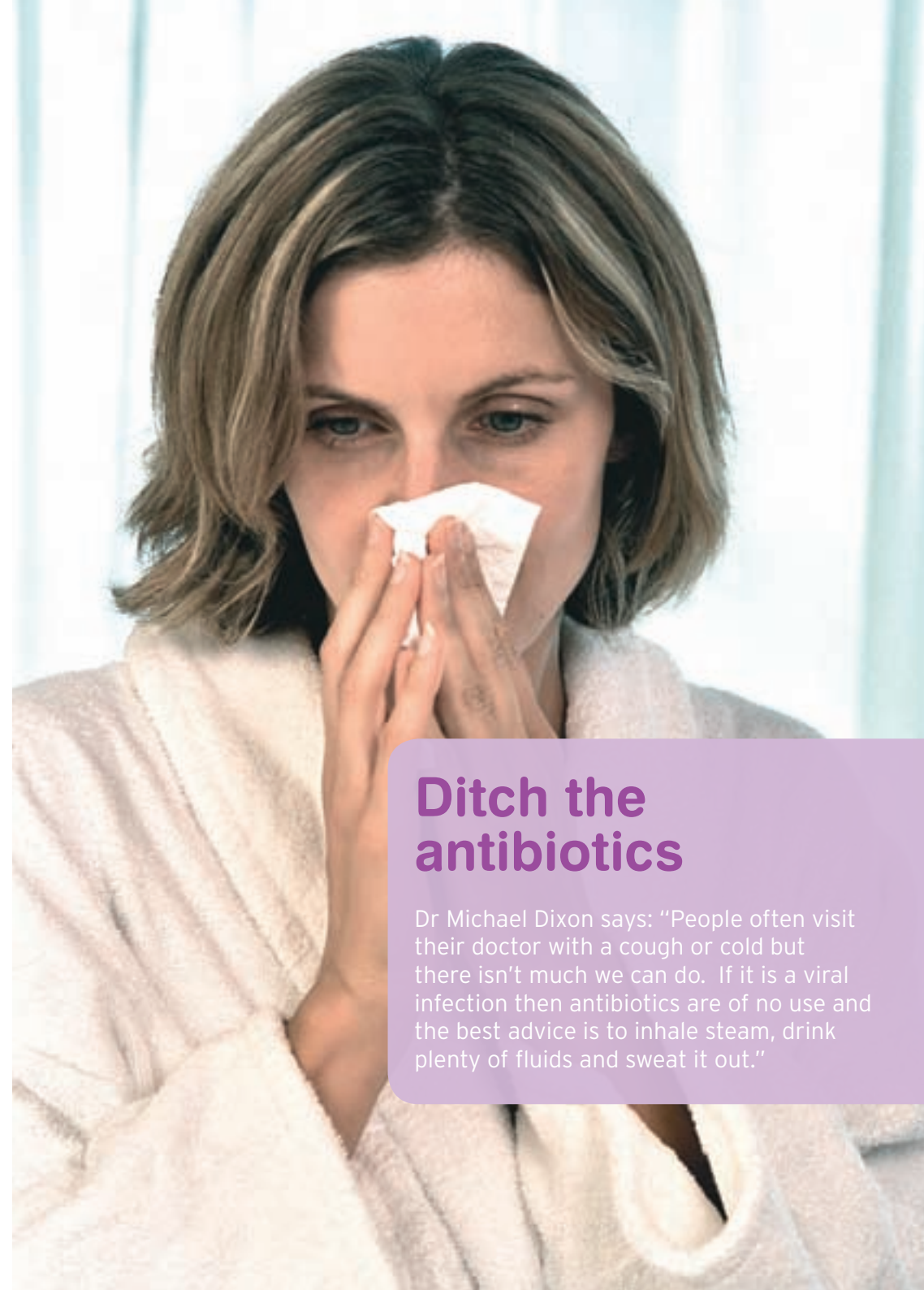
Dr Michael Dixon's tips for preventing and treating coughs and colds

- 1** If you sneeze or cough, cover your mouth with a tissue, then throw it in the bin - this will stop infection spreading.
- 2** Avoid smoky atmospheres. As well as exacerbating colds, smoke is a respiratory tract irritant that increases susceptibility to the viruses that cause respiratory infections.
- 3** If you get a cold or cough then try inhaling steam for five minutes. This will help to kill off some of the bugs and clear your passages by liquefying the thick mucus.
- 4** Get plenty of rest. The human body is able to fight infections more efficiently when it's resting, so take time out to allow the process to happen.
- 5** Eat a balanced diet, which includes plenty of fresh fruit (especially berries) and vegetables (especially greens and coloured root vegetables). This will boost your immunity and help to stave off infection.
- 6** Flush it out! It is important to stay hydrated so aim to drink at least 8 glasses of water a day. Herbal teas or highly diluted squash also contribute to your daily fluid intake.



Feed a cold

Some people lose their appetite if they're suffering from a cold. If you're one of them, try to eat little and often with five or six small meals throughout the day. Nutrient rich snacks include homemade soups (especially chicken soup) and smoothies.



Ditch the antibiotics

Dr Michael Dixon says: "People often visit their doctor with a cough or cold but there isn't much we can do. If it is a viral infection then antibiotics are of no use and the best advice is to inhale steam, drink plenty of fluids and sweat it out."

Kids and Colds

UK kids skip 16 million school days a year due to coughs and colds

Colds and coughs are easily passed from one child to the next in schools and nurseries. Children also tend to get a lot more colds than adults because their bodies haven't had time to build up sufficient immunity - each time our bodies have a virus it builds up immunity against it.



When to see a doctor



GPs are often overstretched during winter months with many of their consultations taken up with minor ailments such as coughs and colds. In most cases it is not necessary to see your doctor for a cold or cough, instead it's better to see your pharmacist who can advise you of the best treatment.

However, whilst most coughs and colds run their course without doing any harm, there are certain situations when you or your child should see a GP. These include:

- If you or your child has a chronic condition such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease.
- Mothers of young babies, older and frailer people should seek help if they are unwell.
- All babies under three months with a temperature of over 38 degrees should be assessed by a doctor, as should babies aged three to six months with a fever higher than 39 degrees.
- If your child has a headache or abdominal pain.
- If your child is vomiting but does not have diarrhoea, or has a rash in association with the fever.
- If a child isn't playing, eating or drinking normally, and appears floppy or lethargic.
- If your child's fever doesn't respond to paracetamol

DID YOU KNOW?

Children whose parents smoke are more likely to suffer from coughs and colds.



Giving cough medicines to young children

- Never exceed the stated dose or give your child more than one medicine at any one time
- Consult your doctor before giving cough medicine to children under 2 years of age
- If your child's symptoms worsen or do not improve within a few days seek professional advice
- If you are at all concerned, ask your pharmacist for advice



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- ✓ All herbal medicines registered under this scheme have a nine digit registration number on their packaging starting with the letters THR

