Colds are caused by viruses. They spread when people breathe, sneeze, or cough on other people. Colds last about 1 to 2 weeks. Colds can not be treated with antibiotics.

There are several signs that you have a cold. They include:

- A stuffy, runny nose
- Cough
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Not hungry – loss of appetite

To be more comfortable, you can:

- Drink plenty of liquids (especially water).
- If you have a stuffy nose, put two drops of normal saline (salt water) in each side of your nose. You can buy “saline nasal spray” at the drug store without a prescription.
- Blow your nose to gently remove drainage, especially before you eat or go to sleep.
- Take a bath when you need one.
- Watch for signs of infection. They include:
  - Fever of 102° F (39° C) that lasts more than two days
  - Earache
  - Sore throat
  - Trouble swallowing
  - Vomiting
  - Trouble breathing
- Do not smoke. Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke. Tell others not to smoke around you or in your house.
- Wash your hands frequently and have everyone in your family wash their hands frequently to prevent the spread of illness.

Call your health care provider or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- You have any signs of infection or other symptoms.
- You have asthma and are having increased asthma symptoms.
- You are unable to drink.
- You have questions or concerns about your illness.