



# Why does my child get sick so much?

*It seems like my child has "daycare-itis"*

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**The fact that your child bounces back from all these colds, never gets serious infections, and is growing so well means your child has a wonderful immune system!**

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*"It seems like my baby (or toddler or preschooler) has been sick all winter! Should I worry about her immune system?"* This is a common question we are asked in the first several years of life, and especially common from parents of young children in daycare. We know how frustrating it can be when it seems like your child just gets over one cold and goes right on to the next, but did you know that exposure to viral illnesses when young is actually good for your immune system?

The average healthy child suffers through anywhere from 7 to 12 upper respiratory infections or "common colds", during their first year of life! The cold count is at least 12 if the child is in daycare, and these colds will be most common in the winter months. Ear infections can complicate 30-50% of these colds as well. While this is scary and frustrating for parents of young children, exposure to these viruses has to happen at some point, whether it be now in daycare or later in elementary school. And research has actually shown that kids in daycare before age 30 months suffer from fewer respiratory infections in elementary school than their counterparts. The numbers eventually even out, usually by age 12, but having infections earlier in life may prevent your child from missing days of school later! (If fever does not break within 72 hours, always call.)

The "hygiene hypothesis" says that kids exposed to less sterile environments (such as daycare) may not only benefit from fewer infections but also decreases in asthma and allergy, all of which are related to the immune system.

Despite this, your daycare facility should follow the hygiene recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics to minimize your child's risk of infections. Visit [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) and [www.healthychildcare.org](http://www.healthychildcare.org) with trusted advice for your daycare.

**When to worry:** If you have a family history of immune deficiency, if your child is not growing well, or if your child has suffered from two or more serious infections such as pneumonia or hospitalization in a year. Then your pediatrician will recommend evaluating your child's immune system.

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