



Colds/Cough/Congestion



Upper respiratory infection – the most common viral illness of childhood

Upper Respiratory Infections can involve the nose, mouth, sinuses, or throat. These are usually viral infections and are very common in babies and children. Most children have 6-8 colds a year and they often last 7-10 days. For kids in daycare, they can have 10-12 colds per year. Occasionally colds will lead to an ear infection or sinus infection, but the large majority of colds are self limited and will go away on their own. We can help a bit with comfort measures, but there is nothing other than time that will make the cold disappear.

Symptoms:

- Stuffy or runny nose
- Mouth breathing
- Sore throat, scratchy throat, hoarse voice
- Whiny, irritable, decreased appetite and activity
- Cough, especially when lying down

- Fever, low grade or higher

What You Can Do:

- Saline nose drops—Put a few drops in each nostril and 2-3 seconds gently suck the nose with a nasal aspirator. This can be irritating, so it is not necessary if your baby is sleeping and eating well.
- Cool mist humidifier
- Elevate the head of the bed
- Keep your child well hydrated
- Tylenol (if over 2 months) or Motrin (if over 6 months) can be used for comfort or fever. See our Fever instructions.

Medicine for Colds, Important Safety Information

Since colds are viral infections, antibiotics will not help and are not prescribed for simple colds. We agree with the Academy of Pediatrics and FDA statements that recommend that over the counter cold and cough preparations NOT be used in infants under age 2 years because of the high risk of life threatening side effects.

What is safe?

- Tylenol (over 2 months) and Motrin (over 6 months). See our Fever instructions.
- Honey before bed has been shown to help some coughs. The dose is $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon for 1 year—5 years, 1 teaspoon for 6-11 years, and 2 teaspoons for over age 12. Honey should not be used under age 1 year.
- Steam helps to keep the mucus loose which prevents congestion. Have your child sit in a steamy bathroom for 10 minutes.
- Cool mist humidifiers help to keep the air moist which prevents congestion and usually eases nighttime coughs.
- Over age 4 years: Over the counter medications such as Children's Mucinex may help relieve symptoms, but they do not cure the actual cold.

Call Immediately if:

- Your child has trouble breathing, like pulling in between the ribs, flaring at the nose or breathing fast
- Your child shows signs of dehydration
- Your child is less than 2 months old and has a rectal temperature >100.4

Call During Office Hours if:

- Your child's cold lasts longer than 10-14 days
- Your child develops ear pain or is pulling on the ear
- Fever lasts more than 2-3 days
- Your child remains fussy despite Tylenol or Motrin