

HELPING YOUR CHILD WHO HAS A COLD

Colds, or upper respiratory infections (URI), are caused by germs called viruses. Viruses are different than bacteria, so antibiotics do not help children with colds.

Since there are many different types of viruses that cause colds in children, your child may have 6 – 8 colds every year for the first several years of life.

Colds can cause:

**Runny or stuffy nose*

**Sore throat*

**Tiredness*

**Cough*

**Watery eyes*

**Fussiness*

**Fever*

**Poor appetite*

Most colds last approximately 7 – 10 days, and children who have colds should show signs of improvement by the 10th day of illness. If your child is not improving by this time, or if your child develops a new fever after having had several days without a fever, please call for advice.

MORE ABOUT COUGHS:

Coughing is a good and natural way for your child's body to protect her lungs from further infection. Coughing helps to get the virus and the mucous out of the lungs. Coughing can also help prevent more serious infections, like pneumonia. Younger children do not usually cough out their phlegm, or mucous. Instead, they usually swallow it. But this is still helpful as the child has removed the mucous from the airways. Coughing may last several weeks after the infection is gone. If your child still has a cough 2 to 3 weeks after first becoming ill, but is otherwise well (no fever, drinking well, playful), there is usually no reason to worry. If you have questions about your child's continued coughing, or if the coughing lasts longer than 3 weeks, please call your doctor.

Medicines that stop coughing are **NOT** recommended. This includes medicines with dextromethorphan and codeine.

One research study showed that 1 teaspoon of dark honey given at night helped decrease night time coughing. There are now several over the counter medications that have honey as their main ingredient. You can give these medications to children who are older than 1 year of age, as long as the medication does not contain dextromethorphan, antihistamines or decongestants (pseudoephedrine). Because of the risk of botulism, honey should not be given to children younger than 1 year of age.

MORE ABOUT STUFFY NOSES:

Some children have a difficult time breathing or feeding because of their congested noses. There are several ways you can help your child who has a stuffy nose.

**Increase the amount of fluid offered*

**Use a cool air vaporizer or humidifier – use with plain water only; do not add medicines*

**Turn on the shower in your bathroom and close the door. Bring your child into the bathroom with you and allow him to breathe in the steam for about 10 – 15 minutes.*

- *You may try using a bulb syringe to remove the mucous from your child's nose.*
- *You may try saline (salt water) nose drops to loosen the mucous and make it easier for your child to breathe*

Medications for colds and congestion are **NOT** recommended for children.

MORE ABOUT POOR APPETITE:

When children are feeling sick, they often lose their appetite. It is not dangerous for a child to go several days without eating solid food. But it is VERY important for your child to continue to take fluids such as breast milk, formula, water, soup, popsicles, jello, electrolyte solutions. Infants less than one year of age can easily become dehydrated. Please make sure your infant is having 4 – 6 wet diapers a day during the illness. If you have any concerns about your child's hydration, please call our office.

MORE ABOUT TIREDNESS:

Children will normally regulate their activity when they are feeling sick. If your child is more comfortable lying down and resting, please allow him to do that. If your child wants to play and be more active, you do not have to try to make your child rest. If your child is so tired that she is not interested in taking fluids, or does not spend some time during the day doing her normal activities, please call for advice.

PLEASE CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN IF ANY OF THESE OCCUR:

- *Fever lasts longer than 3 days (temperature greater than 101 F or 38.3 C)*
- *Fever recurs – begins again - after your child has had several days without a fever*
- *Your child is unable to take fluids well, is vomiting, or has abdominal pain*
- *Your child complains of an ear ache*
- *Your child is having difficulty breathing, is breathing very fast, or is unable to lie down comfortably*
- *Your child is extremely fussy and cannot be comforted easily*
- *Your child is very sleepy and difficult to wake up*

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