

When Your Child Has A Cold

A cold is a viral infection of the nasal passages and throat. Hundreds of viruses pass between people to cause these infections, so your child may have several colds each year. At first they may have a runny nose, sore throat, cough, slight fever and feel achy or tired. After a few days, the nasal discharge becomes thicker and yellow or green. The cold may last up to 2 weeks, but you should notice your child feeling better after the first few days.

To make your child comfortable during a cold:

Increase fluids—They may not want many solid foods, so increase liquids like sports drinks, fruit juice (too much can cause diarrhea!), soda, soups. These will loosen secretions and keep your child from getting dehydrated. If your infant needs extra fluids, Pedialyte is preferred. Breast fed infants may continue to nurse.

Remove nasal secretions—Use a humidifier (the Walgreen's Ultrasonic Humidifier is recommended) on and off during the day and when your child is sleeping. This helps to loosen secretions and soothe a sore throat. Salt water (saline) can be put into the nose to clear nasal passages. For infants, put some in each nostril each time you change their diaper, especially before they eat or sleep. For older children, two or three times daily should be sufficient. Purchase nasal saline without a prescription or make at home using ¼ teaspoon salt in 4 oz. water. Use a suction bulb or do a sinus rinse if the secretions are very thick.

Elevate during sleep—Lift your older child's head in bed with a pillow or place them in a recliner or corner of the sofa. Place a blanket under your small child's mattress. An infant may sleep better in their infant carrier, car seat or swing. Be sure to fasten all safety straps.

Reduce fever—Fever is not harmful to your child. If your child has a temperature over 102 degrees, give them acetaminophen (Tylenol type products) or ibuprofen (Motrin type products) and cool liquids. Begin a bath in warm water and as the water cools it will help cool your child. Do not wake a sleeping child to give fever medicine.

Exception: If a newborn, less than 2 months old, has a rectal temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher, they should be seen by a doctor immediately.

Cold medicines—There are no medicines to shorten the length of a cold. Decongestants and cough suppressants may be helpful during the first few days for children over two years of age.

Call my office immediately for:

- Dehydration with dry mouth and decreased urination
- Fever over 104 degrees
- Fever to 100.5 degrees in a newborn
- Difficult or noisy breathing after you have cleared the nose
- A child so irritable you cannot comfort them or so sleepy you cannot awaken them

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