

COMMON COLD

Your child will probably have more colds, or upper respiratory infections, than any other illness. In the first two years alone, most youngsters have eight to ten colds! Most colds go away by themselves and do not lead to anything worse.

Colds are caused by viruses, and are spread directly from one person to another through a sneeze or cough at close range or indirectly by touching contact with an infected individual. Therefore, hand washing is a very important means for preventing the spread of colds. Colds are not caught because of weather changes, air-conditioning, teething, or failure to wear a hat.

Once the virus is present and multiplying, your child will develop the familiar symptoms and signs of runny nose (first, a clear discharge and later, a thicker, slightly colored one), slight fever (101-102 degrees) for one or two days, decreased appetite, red eyes, sore throat, and cough. If your child has a typical cold without complications, he should begin feeling better in three to four days, although the runny nose and accompanying cough may take seven to ten days to improve.

HOME TREATMENT OF COLDS

A child with a cold usually does not need to see us at the office unless the condition becomes more serious. If you are comfortable handling the cold as outlined here, and the cold resolves as expected, there is no need to call – but be alert for changes in your child's condition. We expect to hear from you immediately if your child appears to have difficulty breathing for reasons other than a stuffy nose or has bluish lips. Please call during office hours if he has pain in the ear (see **Ear Infections**), temperature greater than 102 degrees for longer than 48 hours, a cough not improving within seven days, a runny nose not improving within ten days, or excessive crankiness or nighttime waking.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for the common cold. Antibiotics have no effect on viruses, so the best you can do is to make your child comfortable. Make sure he gets extra rest and plenty of fluids. A cool mist humidifier placed in the room close to your child may help keep nasal secretions more liquid and make him more comfortable. With a baby, raising the head of the crib slightly may promote better drainage during sleep.

If your infant is having trouble feeding or sleeping because of clogged mucus in the nose, try clearing his nose with rubber bulb suction after first placing two drops of saline nose drops in each nostril. These can be purchased over the counter or made at home by adding 1/4 tsp. table salt to 1 cup of warm water. This technique works best when your baby is under six months of age. As he gets older, he'll fight the bulb, making it difficult to suction the mucus.

Medications should be used sparingly, if at all. Tylenol can be used to control fever, if present. Decongestants with or without cough suppressants may provide temporary relief of symptoms. Both Pediacare and Triaminic have both types of products in both drops and syrups. The dose is easy to calculate, since it will be the same for Tylenol drops and syrup! Remember to dose by weight rather than age. Be realistic, treatment will not cure the cold, shorten the duration, or make the symptoms vanish. Aim for greater comfort as your goal.