

# Colds and Flu in Children

Colds, flu, and chest colds (bronchitis) are common. Most children get 6 to 10 colds each year. Many begin to feel better within a week, but symptoms can last up to 3 weeks. Yellow or green mucus is common with a cold and does not mean that your child needs antibiotics.

## Antibiotics

Antibiotics will not help your child's cold, flu, or chest cold (bronchitis). Antibiotics only kill bacteria – not viruses – and colds and flu are caused by viruses. Using antibiotics when they are not needed can be harmful. It increases your child's chances of being infected with bacteria that antibiotics cannot kill.

## Home treatment

Rest, fluids, and time are the best treatments for colds and flu. Be extremely cautious about giving over-the-counter cough and cold medicines. Instead, try to:

- Give your child lots of fluids (8 or more glasses of water a day).
- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest. Stick to quiet activities.
- Give your child lots of love and attention.

## Cough and cold medicines – use with caution.

- Cough and cold medicines only treat the symptoms of the common cold such as runny nose, congestion, fever, aches, and irritability. They do not cure the cold. Children get better with time.
- Over-the-counter cold and cough medicines can be dangerous for young children. **Do not give any cough or cold products to children under 4 years of age.**
- Cough and cold medicines have not been proven to be effective in children. These products come in many different strengths.

Too much medicine can have serious side effects.

## Runny or stuffy nose

- *Bed:* Raise the head of the crib or bed about three to four inches.
- *Rubber bulb syringe:* Use a soft rubber bulb syringe to clear a stuffed nose for an infant or young child. Saline (salt water) nose drops will help loosen the mucus. Place three drops of warm water or saline nose drops in each nostril. After one minute use the rubber bulb syringe to suck out the mucus gently. *Tip: before putting the bulb syringe into the child's nose, squeeze the bulb to push the air out and lightly close the other nostril.*
- *Steamy air:* Have your child breathe in cool mist from a vaporizer (using plain water only), or run a warm shower with the bathroom door closed and have your child sit in the bathroom to breathe in the steam.

## Cough

- *Humidifier:* Use a humidifier filled with distilled water in your child's room. Do not add medication to the water in the humidifier.
- *Honey* can help quiet a cough for children older than 1 year. (Do not give honey to babies younger than 1 year, as it may be harmful.)

## Sore throat

- For children over 4 years old, juice popsicles can be soothing.
- If your child is able, encourage gargling with warm salt water twice a day.

- For children over 6 years old, you can give ice chips or hard candy to suck but beware of choking.
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin/Advil) for pain.

### Fever, headache, and body aches

- A fever is the body's normal response to an infection, so fevers are common when a child has a cold or the flu.
- If your child is uncomfortable, you can give your child acetaminophen (any age) or ibuprofen (children older than 6 months). If your child is under 2 years old, see below. *Warning: Do not give aspirin to children or teens under 20 years old.*
- Keep your child's room comfortably cool and dress the child lightly.
- Sponging is not necessary to reduce fever and is not recommended, since it can make your child more uncomfortable. If you do decide to sponge your child, give acetaminophen or ibuprofen first, and stop if your child shivers. *Do not add rubbing alcohol to the water; it can be harmful if your child breathes it.*

### When is it OK to send my child to daycare or school?

Children may go to school if they are not contagious and their symptoms are mild. However, if your child feels ill, it is best for him or her to rest at home.

Before your child returns, check the school's or daycare's guidelines. In general, keep your child at home if he or she:

- Has a contagious condition
- Requires a lot of one-on-one attention or care from an adult
- Lacks alertness to learn or play
- Has a fever

### Is my child eating enough?

It is normal for a sick child to have a poor appetite. Don't force your child to eat or stay in bed. Instead, offer your child lots of extra fluids (water, juice) and soft, easy to swallow foods, such as broth (chicken or beef), applesauce, oatmeal, jello, mashed potatoes, frozen juice bars, popsicles (for children older than 4 years), or ice cream.

### How much acetaminophen (non-aspirin) infant drops should I give my child under 2 years old?

Give acetaminophen drops every 4 to 6 hours.

80mg/0.8 cc (dropperful)

Baby's Weight		Amount of drops
6 to 8 lbs.	=	0.4 ml (40 mg)
9 to 10 lbs.	=	0.6 ml (60 mg)
11 to 12 lbs.	=	0.8 ml (80 mg)
13 to 15 lbs.	=	1.0 ml (100 mg)
16 to 18 lbs.	=	1.2 ml (120 mg)
19 to 20 lbs.	=	1.4 ml (140 mg)
21 to 25 lbs.	=	1.6 ml (160 mg)

### How much ibuprofen infant drops should I give my child under 2 years old?

Give drops every 6 to 8 hours. Do not give more than four times per day. **Do not give ibuprofen to children younger than 6 months old.**

50mg/1.25 cc (dropperful)

Baby's Weight		Amount of drops
12 to 15 lbs.	=	1 dropperful (1.25 ml)
16 to 18 lbs.	=	1 ½ dropperful (1.875 ml)
19 to 20 lbs.	=	1 ¾ dropperful (2.18 ml)
21 to 25 lbs.	=	2 dropperful (2.50 ml)