Colds

Most children get 8 to 10 colds before they are 2 years old. Most colds come and go without any big problems.

There is *no* cure for the common cold since colds are caused by viruses. Antibiotics don't kill viruses so they will not make your child's cold better. But you can help your child *feel* better until the cold goes away.

Signs of a Cold

A child with a cold may show these signs:

- Stuffy, runny nose
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Watery eyes
- Eating more slowly, not feeling hungry
- Sore throat

There may also be a mild fever (under 102°F or 38.9°C) or headache. All this can make your child fussy too.

Colds usually last about a week but can even last for 10 days. If there is fever, it should come at the start of the cold and then go away. Mucus (MYOO-kus) in your child's nose may turn yellow or green after 3 or 4 days. Children can get one cold right after another. So it may seem like your child is sick for a long time.

Call the Doctor If...

...your child has any of these signs:

- Fever lasting more than 2 or 3 days
- Cold symptoms that get worse, instead of better, after a week.
- Trouble breathing or drinking
- Ear pain
- Acting very sleepy or fussy
- Coughing more than 10 days

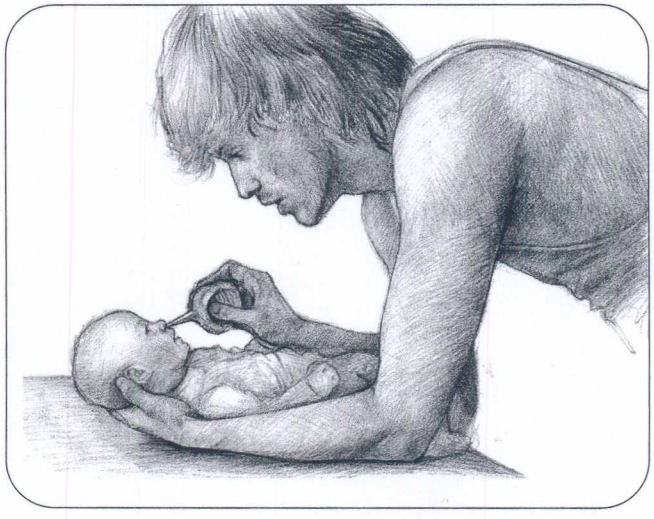
What to Do for a Cold

To Help a Stuffy Nose

Put a cool-mist humidifier in your child's room. A humidifier (hyoo-MID-uh-fye-ur) puts water into the air to help clear your child's stuffy nose. Be sure to clean the humidifier often.

Thin the mucus. Use saline (saltwater) nose drops. Never use any other kind of nose drops unless your child's doctor prescribes them.

Clear your baby's nose with a suction bulb. (This is also called an ear bulb.) Squeeze the bulb first and hold it in. Gently put the rubber tip into one **nostril***, and slowly release the bulb. This will suck the clogged mucus out of the nose. It works best for babies younger than 6 months.



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To Help Fever and Aches

- For a baby 6 months or younger, give **acetaminophen***.
- For a baby or child older than 6 months, give *either* acetaminophen or **ibuprofen***.

Both of these drugs help with fever. But they are not the same. Be sure to get the right kind of medicine for your child's age and weight. Follow what the label says, or ask your child's doctor how much to give.

Note: *Never* give your child aspirin. It's dangerous for children younger than 18 years.

Don't give any other medicines without asking your child's doctor.

Make Sure Your Child Drinks Lots of Liquids

Make sure your child drinks plenty of liquids to avoid getting dehydrated (dee-HIGH-dray-ded). Being dehydrated means your child's body loses water and gets very dry inside. Clear liquids like juice mixed with water may work better than milk or formula if your child's nose is very stuffy.

Can You Prevent Colds?

There is no special way to prevent colds. But you can help keep viruses and other infections from spreading:

- Make sure everyone washes their hands often. Hand-washing helps keep germs from spreading.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue. If you don't have time to get a tissue, bend your arm and sneeze into it.
- Keep your child away from anyone who has a cold, fever, or runny nose.
- Don't share spoons, forks, or drinking cups with anyone who has a cold, fever, or runny nose.
- Wash dishes in hot, soapy water.
- Don't smoke around your child. Keep your child away from cigarette and other tobacco smoke.

* Words to Know

acetaminophen (uh-set-uh-MIN-uh-fin)—a medicine for pain and fever. Tylenol is one brand of acetaminophen.

ibuprofen (eye-byoo-PROH-fin)—a medicine for pain and fever. Advil and Motrin are brands of ibuprofen.

nostril (NAH-strul)—1 of 2 holes in the bottom of the nose, where air goes in and out.

To learn more, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Web site at www.aap.org.

Your child's doctor will tell you to do what's best for your child. This information should not take the place of talking with your child's doctor.

Note: Brand names are for your information only. The AAP does not recommend any specific brand of drugs or products.

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