

Your child has a cold. Now what?



At some point in time, all children will have a cold and/or cough. This is a rite of passage for every parent, although sometimes it can be a bit stressful.

Colds, or upper respiratory infections, are usually caused by viruses that can result in nasal congestion, cough, runny nose, sore throat and sometimes even a fever. The symptoms can last for a few days or as long as a week or two. The average length of time that a child can cough after an upper respiratory tract infection is 21 days, although it can be longer.



What can you do for your child when he or she has a cold? Usually all that is needed is some symptomatic relief. Infants and babies may need to have their nose suctioned because they are unable to blow their noses and clear the secretions. Toddlers may need to be chased around with a tissue, while older children can usually blow their own nose (or use the closest sleeve in a pinch)!

Over-the-counter cold medicines typically do not help much. Keeping your child well hydrated helps to keep the secretions loose so that they are cleared more easily. Tylenol or ibuprofen can help if there is a fever or if they're feeling achy in general. Prescription medications are not recommended for coughs in children.

Nighttime can be particularly frustrating. When your child lays down to go to sleep, he or she is trying to breathe through a very congested nose. The coughing ramps up and kids can't settle down to go to sleep. Placing a cool mist humidifier next to them when they are sleeping can help. It will keep the secretions nice and thin during the night and help keep their throat from drying out when they are breathing through their mouth throughout the night. All these things can help them sleep better. Propping them up a little bit will also help lessen the nasal congestion.

While we don't typically use medications for cough, there are things that can help, such as giving them a spoonful of honey (if they are over one year of age), or giving them some simple syrup, which is sugar dissolved in water. For toddlers and younger children, another idea is to make a Jell-O solution. This trick requires you to dissolve the Jell-O in the hot water as directed and add the cold water. Put this warm liquid (test to make sure it's not too hot) in a cup and let your child sip on the warm Jell-O. The

sugar and pectin in the Jell-O will help settle the cough, much like a cough drop, only this form is not a choking hazard.



Again, colds typically will resolve on their own after a week or so. If your child has a fever with a cold that lasts longer than three days or if they seem particularly uncomfortable, especially at night, please call us. One of our staff can discuss whether your child should be seen in the office for further treatment, or if they simply need continued TLC.



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