

HELPING THE SICK CHILD AT HOME

COLDS

This information does not replace qualified medical advice from your provider but can guide you on what you can do until regular office hours.

Most children have 6-8 colds a year, but it might be more if they go to daycare. A cold is any illness with a runny or congested nose. It might be accompanied by fever and/or sore throat and lasts from 5-10 days. The nasal discharge might be clear, cloudy, yellow, or green. Occasionally, colds will lead to an ear infection or sinus infection, but the vast majority just need extra tender loving care.

What you can do:

- Your child is contagious. They can spread this illness to other people. Stay at home and keep children out of school or daycare while they are sick.
- Get lots of rest and drink plenty of fluids. Whatever your child usually drinks is fine.
- Children with nasal congestion will have decreased appetite. Having a blocked nose changes the sense of taste, so food might taste strange. They also don't feel as good. As long as they are hydrated, it's okay. We'll catch up on nutrition once they are feeling better.
- Babies might have trouble feeding if they have lots of congestion. They will need frequent nasal suctioning, especially before feeding.
- Antibiotics will not cure a cold. The side effects will only make the child sicker and it will be harder for the body to fight future bacterial infections if you take them when you don't need them.
- Over-the-counter cold medication is not recommended for children. It can have dangerous side effects and is not very effective against the cold.

When to call your pediatrician:

- If cold symptoms last longer than 10 days
- If fevers go above 104F

When to go to the emergency room:

- Any child under 3 months old with a temperature of 100.4F (38C) or above
- If your child is breathing fast and areas below the ribs, between the ribs, and in the neck sink in with each attempt to inhale, and it doesn't improve after suctioning.
- If your child is very sleepy and hard to arouse
- If your child is drooling a lot and seems to have a hard time swallowing or talking

If these recommendations do not work or there is something else that worries you, please go to the nearest urgent care for a physician assessment. For emergencies, call 911.

