



Colds: What You Need to Know

Causes

- Colds (also known as upper respiratory infections or URI's) are caused by viruses – adenovirus, parainfluenza virus, rhinovirus. There are hundreds of different strains of each virus. That's why it's next to impossible to build a resistance or immunity to colds.
- Why do some children get more colds than others? Overdoing it and improper diet often play a role. For others, genetic factors or allergies factor in. Children in daycare, in school, or even in large families are at increased risk. Especially during the winter months, this "herd effect" – or what could also be called "the domino effect" – dramatically increase the chances of getting sick.

Complications & Prevention

- The most common complication that children, especially those under twenty-four months old, get from a cold is an ear infection. These usually occur a few days into the cold.
- When a cold lasts more than ten days, doctors now regard this as a sinus infection or sinusitis. The color of the nasal mucus is not regarded as important in diagnosing sinusitis.
- Colds will often bring on bronchitis or an asthma flare-up; on rare occasion, they can lead into pneumonia.
- Good hand washing, avoiding tobacco smoke and other indoor air pollutants, and reducing allergy triggers such as dust and mold can lessen the likelihood of complications.

Treatment Options

- Simply Saline (the brand name) nose spray (in the metal can) has no preservatives and can help thin the mucus. It is gentler than other brands. The Simply Saline can be used as often as needed since it is the same saline that our bodies are made of! We prefer that you not use medicated nasal sprays (e.g. Afrin, Neo-Synephrine) unless we specifically recommend them.
- Do not use a nasal syringe unless your baby turns blue please.
- A humidifier or cool-mist vaporizer can help, especially during the winter months when the heat is on. Colds with a croupy cough also do well with the added moisture.
- Please avoid vapor rubs, vapor patches, lozenges, and oral decongestants, or antihistamines such as Sudafed, Dimetapp, or Triaminic. Unhappily, they although they provide temporary relief, they actually extend the duration of the cold.
- A number of families try natural supplements, including Echinacea, goldenseal, vitamin C, and zinc. Unfortunately, there is not much data on safety and efficacy, especially in small children. Chicken soup and extra vitamin C may have some benefit!
- Fever, headache, or sore throat can be treated with acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Check with us if these symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.

Rest – an extra hour or two of sleep and fluids – soup or juice for the older child – should also be a very important part of the treatment plan