

## Treating COLDS/COUGHS

Colds are caused by viruses and are easily spread from person to person. Fever is possible and the runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, and coughing caused by colds usually resolves within 7-10 days. Clear nasal discharge often turns white, yellow, or green before clearing up. Colds are most common in the fall and winter and can occur 6-10 times per year in young children.

Medicines: Over the counter cough and cold medicines can cause serious side effects in young children. The risks of using these medicines outweigh any benefits from reducing symptoms. Antibiotics usually do not play a role in treating colds and the coughs associated with them because they are viral infections. Antibiotics kill bacteria. They do not kill viruses. There is no cure for the common cold, but there are several things we can do to make our children more comfortable. Some newer cough medicines are labeling themselves as "homeopathic" and "all natural." I have reviewed every single one on the market, and none of them are safe for children. There is one that is mostly just honey with really no other ingredients in it-it is safe for children > 1 year of age, but save your \$8-\$12. Just go get a container of honey for \$1 or less. (See below)

### Natural Remedies:

- **Runny Nose:** Suction or blow it. "Boogie Wipes" can be very helpful in drawing out the snot, especially in small children who are too young to blow their nose. "Boogie Wipes" are moistened with saline, so they help pull out the mucus, and they contain chamomile, aloe, and vitamin E to help soothe the skin.



- **Blocked Nose:** Use saline spray or drops (found in all pharmacies-over the counter) to loosen up the dried mucus, followed by blowing or suctioning of the nose. If not available, warm water will work fine. You can use a bulb syringe to suction the nose in smaller children. You compress the bulb, stick it into the nostril, and loosen pressure onto the bulb-it will suck out the boogies. Another great snot sucker which is available is the "Nosefrida." It is a tube that you can place against the opening of your child's nostril then you create the suction by using your mouth to suck on the other end of the tube. There are filters that come with it that prevent you from getting snot in your mouth (and from getting your kids germs). I have used it personally when my kids have been sick, and it is awesome!!! Here is the website for more info:

[www.nosefrida.com](http://www.nosefrida.com). Another good option is Graco NasalClear Battery Operated aspirator.



- **Coughing:**  
Less than 3 months of age, see your doctor. Age 3 months to 1 year: Give plenty of fluids. NO HONEY recommended in this age group. Age 1 year and older: Use honey ½ to 1 tsp (2.5-5 ml) as needed. Honey thins the secretions and loosens the cough. Research has shown that honey is better than drugstore cough syrups at reducing the frequency and the severity of nighttime coughing. Lemon juice is a great decongestant. Take equal parts of honey and lemon juice, about ½-1 tsp of each, put in the microwave for 5-10 seconds to make them soft enough to incorporate, let it cool, and

have your child eat it off of the spoon. If they won't, put honey and lemon juice in cooled decaffeinated herbal tea (they have every flavor imaginable at most supermarkets-you have to be able to find at least one your child will take). If they still won't take it, then make the tea with the honey and lemon and freeze it into ice pops-this I know they will take! In older children you can also use cough drops to suck on as needed. For coughing spasms expose the child to warm mist from a shower.

- **Other Remedies:** *Fluids:* Help your child drink plenty of fluids. Staying well hydrated thins the body's secretions, making it easier to cough and blow the nose. You do not need to limit dairy-it is an old wife's tale that dairy increases mucous production. Your child does not need Pedialyte unless they are having significant fluid losses from vomiting and diarrhea. *Humidity:* A cool mist humidifier can also really help. Moist air keeps the nasal mucus from drying up and lubricates the airway. Running a warm shower can also help. *Elevation:* Keeping the head of the bed elevated, however you can accomplish this safely, will also help with the post nasal drip that accompanies most colds. Do not use a pillow under the head in children less than 1 year old. In small children, place something underneath their mattress to elevate the head of the bed. *Aquaphor:* Can be used to heal and protect the skin on the face and around the nose that can get very irritated from the constant moisture on the skin and the frequent wiping. It can be used multiple times/day as needed. *Baby Vicks:* You can apply baby Vicks to the chest of congested/coughing kids over the age of 3 months. Some research has shown that applying the Baby Vicks to the child's feet with socks over it can also really help with a cough. NEVER USE regular Vicks Vapor Rub on children since it contains camphor, which is very toxic if ingested, it is a Poison Control nightmare. Baby Vicks contains aloe extract, eucalyptus oil, lavender oil, rosemary oil. Never apply this product to the child's nose or face. Use only on the chest or feet. Do not put into vaporizers or humidifiers.



- **Treatment is Not Always Needed:**  
If symptoms aren't bothering your child, then no intervention is necessary. For infants trying to feed from a bottle or the breast, clearing out their nasal passages prior to feeds may be helpful. Only treat symptoms if they cause discomfort, interrupt sleep, or really bother the child. The general rule of thumb is: "If the boogies are not bothering them, then don't let them bother you."  
Since fevers are beneficial, only treat them if your child seems uncomfortable. Remember, don't treat a number, treat the misery. See fever handout.
- **Call for an appointment and have your child seen by a doctor if your child:**
  - Is wheezing, having very noisy breathing, or breathing faster or harder than usual
  - Is extremely fussy or very sleepy or inactive
  - Develops a rash
  - Has cold symptoms that last for more than 7-10 days
  - Is less than 3 months old
  - Has persistent or high fever
  - Complains of an ear ache or has persistent thick eye discharge