

COMMON COLD (Congested Nose)

1. **Definition:** Every normal child catches colds. A two year old may have as many as eight colds a year. A child in daycare can catch a cold during the winter season every two to three weeks. As children grow, they develop more resistance to the viruses that cause colds, which is helpful since we have no cure for cold viruses. **Antibiotics or cold medications will not stop or cure a cold.**
2. **Symptoms:** Colds or upper respiratory infections can cause stuffy nose, runny nose, sore throats, cough, sneezing, and fever.
3. Many people make the mistake a cold for a sinus infection. Generally, sinus infections are only diagnosed after the child has had 10-14 days of symptoms. Colds will normally last 7-10 days. Antibiotics will not help colds.
4. **Treatment:**
 - a. Although there is no cure for a cold, you can help make your child feel more comfortable while he/she is recovering. You may give Tylenol for fever or discomfort (refer to section on fever). You should increase your child's fluids if possible. You should also elevate the head of your child's bed to make breathing easier during sleep. Vaporizers or cool mist humidifier are helpful for breathing problems (see below). Use your vaporizer at the first sign of a cold. Make sure you change the water daily as it can become a breeding ground for mold and bacteria.
 - b. For a dry stuffy nose with only a little discharge:
 1. Use salt water nose drops. Salt water nose drops are available over the counter or use ¼ teaspoon salt to 8 ounces of water, made fresh daily, 2 to 3 drops as necessary in each nostril while the child is lying on his/her back on a bed with his/her head hanging over the side. Then have the child blow his/her nose after waiting one to two minutes.
 2. If the child is too young to blow his nose after the salt water drops, after one to two minutes, use a soft, rubber bulb syringe to gently suction the loosened mucus. Express the air out of the syringe, place in child's nostrils and release the syringe. Empty the contents into a tissue and repeat the procedure in the other nostril. Sometimes you may not obtain much mucus even when you hear it and may need more suction. You can obtain this by placing your thumb over the open nostril **after** you place the syringe in the other nostril. If a soft rubber syringe was not sent home with you from the hospital, you can obtain a nasal aspirator at your local drug store.
5. **Medicines: For a runny nose with lots of clear discharge:** The best treatment is blowing the nose for a day or two. Cough and cold preparations are generally not of great benefit. Side effects of these medications are significant,-nervousness, dry mouth, problems with sleep. So they should generally be avoided under six years of age, and

should only be continued if they improve the child's level of comfort. Remember that cold medicines will not cure or shorten the length of a cold. If used, these medications should be chosen based on the symptoms you wish to relieve. That is, a decongestant is for relief of a very runny nose, or a cough suppressant (one containing Dextromethorphan) is for the relief of a persistent cough. Expectorants are usually ineffective; combination medicines contain unnecessary ingredients and more side effects.

- 6. Choosing a vaporizer or humidifier:** Some vaporizers boil water to produce steam. Others use vibration or a fan to project moisture, usually cool, into the air. Both systems put moisture into the air to moisten and thin secretions in air passages. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends cool mist units because they are safer with no risk of hot water or steam injuries.

Whichever unit you choose, keep it clean. Rinse, dry, and refill the unit each day. Clean the tank once or twice a week by scrubbing with a dilute bleach solution and rinsing well.

7. Call our office during regular hours if:

1. The fever lasts for over three days in older children.
2. You suspect an ear infection. In a baby, signs of an earache could include a marked change in temperament (fussy or cranky), decreased appetite, or waking night when the baby has always slept through.
3. A fever recurs after a week of illness.
4. The skin under the opening of the nose becomes raw or cracked and will not heal.
5. Or, any symptoms that concern you.
6. If symptoms last longer than 2 weeks.

8. Call our office urgently if:

- a. Any temperature of 100.4° F (38.0°C) or above rectally in a baby three months or younger.
- b. Any difficulty with breathing (difficulty drawing air in or out of the lungs).