

The Common Cold

Colds are upper respiratory infections caused by viruses. Preschool children get three to nine colds a year. That's one at least every six weeks! Children in out-of-home day care programs get more, especially if their playgroup has 7 or more.

Symptoms may include nasal discharge and congestion, fever, chills, generalized aches, and scratchy throat. The infection usually last 3-7 days but symptoms may persist for up to two weeks. Most are self-limited.

Our biggest concern is your child's health and we want you to call for any changes in behavior or if a high fever (over 103) persists beyond 24-36 hours.

Treatment

Antibiotics and vitamin C have been shown to be ineffective in treating and preventing viral respiratory tract infections, Medications are used to alleviate symptoms during the self-limited course of the infection. Decongestants, expectorants, and cough suppressants are the main medications used. Antihistamines are used for allergy congestion and generally are not part of treating viral infections. Wash your hands a lot and don't share hand towels!

Special Care with Infants

The Academy of Pediatrics does not routinely recommend cough suppressants and decongestant use in children under 9 months of age because of potentially serious side effects.

Cool mist, nasal saline drops with bulb suctioning, head elevation during sleep and extra oral fluids are recommended in this age. Saline drops can be purchased or made at home (1/4 tsp. salt in 8 oz. of water).

Decongestants

Most over the counter brands act by constricting blood vessels in the nasal passages that open nasal passages and decrease congestion. Pseudoephedrine is the primary ingredient that's used in making methamphetamine, so recently it has been more complicated to buy it.



Decongestants

pseudoephedrine: (Afrin, Sudafed, Robitussin)

phenylpropanolamine: (Dimetap, Triaminic)

phenylephrine: (Phenergan)

Cough suppressants

Always remember, your cough is a protective reflex that clears your airway! Cough suppressants act on the cough center in the brain. Most coughs are triggered by increased airway secretions so treating the congestion usually works best. For mild to moderate coughs, dextromethorphan is as effective as narcotics in research studies.

Dextromethorphan:(in most common OTC 's)

Codeine: (narcotic by prescription only)

hydrocodon (narcotic by prescription only)

Expectorants

These work by thinning secretions and stimulating mucous clearance. Research studies show this effect only in experimentally high doses not found in over-the-counter preparations. The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend their use in children. Guaifenesin is the most common over-the-counter preparation.

7/00 GBG