



When Your Child Has a Cold

The common cold is a typically self-limiting viral illness that can last up to 10 days in children.

The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) recommends against use of over-the-counter (OTC) cough/cold medications in children under the age of 2 as they have not been found to be effective in children and can cause serious and potentially life-threatening side effects. Over the counter cold medications also often contain multiple ingredients, which can increase the risk of accidental overdose. Many health care providers encourage parents to avoid OTC cold medications such as decongestants, antihistamines, and antitussives in children up to age 6.

Homeopathic medications are not regulated by the FDA and may contain larger amounts of ingredients than what is listed on the labels. It is recommended to avoid these medications in children under the age of 4.

There are several things you can do at home to keep your child comfortable while they recover:

- Ensuring adequate hydration- this helps thin secretions so they can be cleared more easily. Don't worry too much if your child has less of an appetite when they aren't feeling well- push fluids over foods for a day or two.
- For general discomfort or fever it is safe to give weight appropriate doses of acetaminophen OR ibuprofen (in children older than 6 months). It is no longer recommended to alternate between the two as this increases the risk of accidentally giving too much of either medication. Also remember that some OTC cold medicines also have these ingredients in them so be sure to read labels carefully!
- For nasal congestion it is safe to use saline drops, sprays or irrigation along with suction in infants/toddlers (bulb syringe, nose frieda, etc.). Cool mist humidifiers are also preferred over warm mist/steam.
- For cough in children over the age of 1 year, honey is a safe and natural suppressant. Caregivers can give 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of honey either straight or diluted in a warm liquid a few times a day. DO NOT give honey to children less than 1 year of age due to the increased risk of botulism.

When to call your provider:

1. If your child has a fever (100.4 or greater) for more than 4 days
2. For any signs of difficulty breathing
3. For any signs of dehydration (having less than 2 wet diapers a day, dry/cracked lips, no tears with crying)
4. If your child has nasal symptoms of congestion or discharge for longer than 10 days and symptoms are not improving
5. If your child has a cough that is not improving within 10 days or is getting worse
6. For any associated ear pain