

## The Common Cold

The Common Cold is an unavoidable part of childhood and necessary for the developing immune system. There are over 200 different common cold viruses. Children can catch their first cold at any age, but tend to catch them at a younger age if they are in day care or have older siblings. Don't be alarmed if your child seems to get frequent colds, as young children typically get 6-10 colds per year.

### Symptoms and duration

Colds start with congestion and a clear or green runny nose. This may be accompanied by a sore throat, cough, sneeze, swollen glands, or a fever under 100 degrees. You may also notice a decrease in your child's appetite. Always encourage liquids and don't worry about forcing your child to eat. Your child's cold will typically clear in 7-10 days.

### When to see a Physician

If you notice the following symptoms, your child needs to be seen by the doctor:

- Earache
- Difficulty breathing, even after clearing nasal mucus
- Fever lasting longer than 3 days
- Green nasal discharge lasting longer than 5 days
- Any symptoms lasting longer than 10 days

### Treatment

There is no cure for the common cold. Medicines don't "cure" the cold, or shorten its duration. You do not need to give cold or cough medicines. If your child is having trouble sleeping because of discomfort caused by the cold, you can try the following:

2-6 months: **Acetaminophen Only** (pain and fever reducer)

6 months - 6 years: Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen (pain and fever reducers)

6-11 years: Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, or any "Children's" cough and cold medicine.

**Do not use cold or cough medicines in children younger than age 6 unless prescribed by your doctor.**

For babies and young children unable to blow their noses, use saline (salt water) nose drops to clear the mucus. Any brand of over the counter saline is fine. Put 2-3 drops of saline in your baby's nose, and gently suction the mucus from each nostril using a bulb syringe.

Another way to help your baby breathe and sleep better during a cold is to elevate the head of the crib or have your baby sleep in its infant seat.

Children can't completely avoid catching colds. However, you can reduce the frequency of illness by encouraging good hand washing habits, and teaching children to keep their fingers away from their noses and mouths.