

Upper Respiratory Infections

Upper respiratory infections are viruses that infect the nose, throat, mouth, & the rest of the upper airways. Some of those viruses cause mild infections, but some are nasty. Unfortunately we don't have any effective medications that significantly alter the course of most of those infections, so they have to take their natural course till child's immunity kick them out of the system. We can make the child more comfortable by treating the symptoms, so we give fever & pain reducers, cough suppressants, decongestants, chloraseptic for sore throat, fluids, rest, cool mist humidifier for cough & congested noses, and for infants normal saline nose drops and suctioning the nose. **Antibiotics are not a solution to those infections but a problem.** Antibiotics work only on bacteria and will not kill the virus. If given in a course of a viral infection **they will increase the chance of your child having a secondary bacterial infection like ear infection or pneumonia and it will be resistant.**

Please understand that what starts as a cold doesn't always ends as such. Cold viruses change the immunity system and can lead to a complicating bacterial infection like ear & sinus infection, or pneumonia, or it can progress to the lungs and cause wheezing and bronchiolitis, or bronchitis. Again starting an antibiotics before this happens will increase (not decrease) the chance that it will happens and it will be resistant. The best strategy is to keep a **watchful eye** on your child, and if symptoms worsen, don't get better in ten days, fever persists more than four days, or it gets higher, or it develops when it is not present at the beginning, or it comes back after it is gone, or if child develops a new symptom like wheezing, difficulty breathing, chest pain, earache, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, vomiting, or any new symptom, **you should contact the doctor.**

Please also understand that many infections start as a cold for few days to weeks before more specific signs develops. Examples include almost all viral infections like chicken pox, measles, mumps, & hepatitis, and some bacterial infections like pertussis. It is impossible to detect these infections in the "cold" stage by exam, and it is impossible to test every child with a cold for all those infections. Again the best strategy is to keep a **watchful eye** on your child and to call if your child develops more specific signs like rash, vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, whopping cough, sore throat, blisters in the mouth, stiff neck, swelling, weakness, poor feeding, or any new symptom. Remember these infections are not common and most children with cold symptoms just have a cold but keep an eye on your child and keep us informed.