

## Upper Respiratory Infections (Colds)

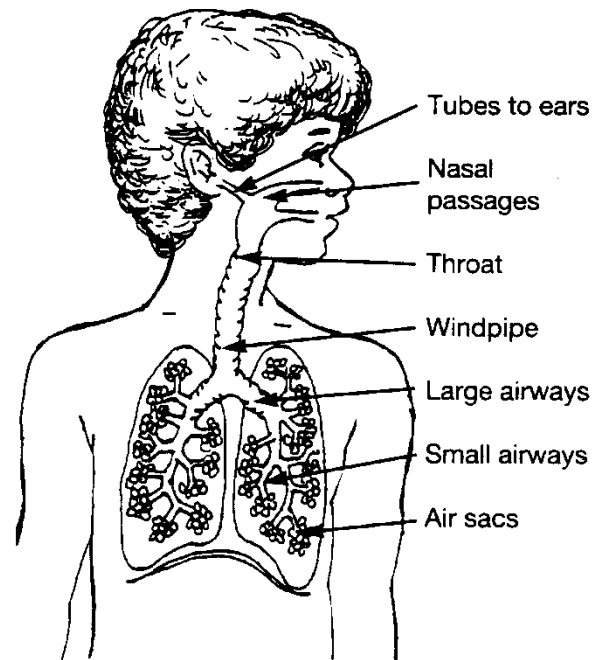
The common cold is a respiratory infection caused by a virus. It affects the child's nose and throat (Picture 1). **Antibiotics do not work against a virus.** It may take 3 to 14 days for your child to get well.

While your child is getting well, some special care is needed to keep from spreading the infection to the child's ears and lungs.

### Rest and Nutrition

Rest is especially important when your child is ill. He or she should play quietly indoors. If he doesn't want to stay in bed, he can lie on the couch or on a blanket on a warm floor away from drafts.

It is important to give plenty of liquids such as fruit juice, water or popsicles. Give small amounts often, but don't force him to drink or eat. This could cause vomiting. Your child will eat when he is hungry. It is more important for him to drink than to eat.



**Picture 1** Tubes lead from the throat to the ears and lungs.

### Fever

- Take your child's temperature every 4 hours until there has been no fever for 24 hours. A fever is a temperature of at least:
  - 101° F axillary (under the arm)
  - 103° F by rectum
  - 102° F by mouth
- If your child has a history of seizures with fever or seems uncomfortable, you may give acetaminophen (Tylenol®) every 4 hours for 2 to 3 days.
- You may give ibuprofen instead every 6 to 8 hours if your child is older than 6 months. Be sure to check with your doctor first.
- **Do not give aspirin. Over-the-counter cold medicines are not effective and are not recommended.**

## Swollen Neck Glands

If the glands in your child's neck are swollen and sore, a warm water bottle may help. Fill a hot water bottle half full of warm—**not hot**—water (not over 120°F). To make sure the bottle is not too hot, touch it against the inside part of your arm. It should feel warm, not hot. Wrap it in a thin towel. Every 4 hours let your child lie with his neck against the bottle for 10 minutes on each side.

## Comfort and Care

- The temperature of your child's room should be around 70°F. Hot, dry air dries out the lining of the nose and makes it hard for your child to breathe.
- If your child's nose is "stuffy," a cool mist vaporizer or humidifier can be used to put moisture into the air. Be sure to place it out of your child's reach. Do not put medicine in the vaporizer. Change the water in the vaporizer every day. Clean it as directed.
- If you do not have a vaporizer or humidifier, you can run hot water in the shower for 10 to 15 minutes (Picture 2). **Keep the door closed and stay with your child** while he breathes in the moist air. Be careful to keep him away from the hot water.
- Saline nose drops may be used before eating or bedtime to relieve a stuffy nose.
- You can give warm – not hot – liquids such as chicken broth if your child is over 1 year old.



**Picture 2** Moist air makes breathing easier.

## Protecting Others

- All family members in the home should wash their hands often. All caregivers should wash their hands after being with your child. Viruses are spread by the hands and by respiratory contact.
- Other children should not play with or sleep in the same bed with your sick child during the early stage of the cold. Wash the sick child's drinking glasses, knives, forks or spoons with hot soapy water. Do not let other family members use them.
- Keep a paper bag taped to the bed or couch for disposing of tissues.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor when your child's:

- Cough is "brassy" or has a "barking" sound.
- Breathing is "gasp," wheezy" or grunting.
- Voice is hoarse, he cannot talk or complains of a sore throat.
- Fever is over 101°F under the arm or 102°F by mouth and you cannot bring down after 1 or 2 days.
- Skin color changes to grayish blue or very pale.
- Sickness lasts more than 10 days
- When he pulls at his ears or rolls his head from side to side, refuses to take liquids for 4 hours or more or does not feel like playing or does not "act right."

## Other Helping Hands

You may ask for these other Helping Hands:

- *Croup*, HH-I-19;
- *Fever*, HH-I-105;
- *Respiratory Distress*, HH-I-178;
- *Suctioning Nose with Bulb Syringe*, HH-II-24.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse, or call

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