

Coughs, Colds & Snotty Noses



A child in the first year of life breathes through the nose. This means that the only way a child can breathe comfortably is if the nose is clear and not blocked. The nose connects to the 4 sets of sinuses and the ears by little tubes and this creates a structure of many little passage ways. This is important because this system helps to clean and humidify the air we breathe so that the air that gets to the lungs is clean and warm.

The nose and sinuses produce mucus that traps the dirty particles in the air and little hairs along the passage ways beat in time to clear the mucus.

The nasal passages of a child are very small and they find it difficult to clear even the mucus that is normally produced in the

nose. They are also not able to blow the nose so they frequently sound like they have a blocked nose. Flushing the nose with sterile saline is safe and very useful to clear the nose.

The Common Cold

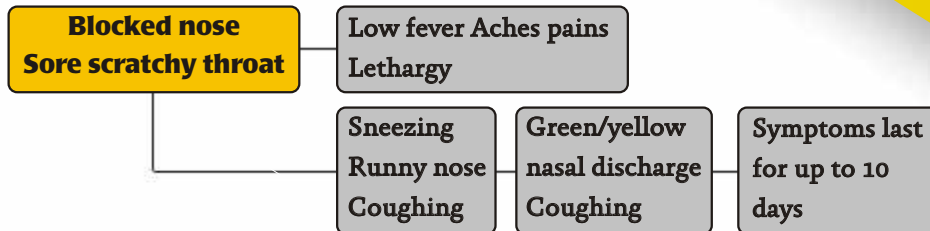
This is a viral infection due to a virus called Rhinovirus and is very common especially in the winter months. The whole infection lasts about ten days and starts with a blocked nose and sore throat for about three days and then the nose starts to run, a cough develops and your child may develop a slight fever.

This continues for another five to seven. The nasal blockage is usually worse at night when the child is lying down.

The runny nose usually starts when the cold is starting to get better. When the cold virus (Rhinovirus) first infects the nose and sinuses, the nose starts making lots of clear mucus. This mucus helps wash the virus out of the nose and sinuses. After two or three days, as the body fights back, the mucus changes to a white or yellow colour. As the bacteria that usually live in the nose grow back, they change the mucus to a greenish colour. This is normal. It doesn't mean your child has an infection that needs to be treated with medicines like antibiotics.

Coughs, Colds & Snotty Noses

The Common Cold



Why not take antibiotics for The Common Cold?

Taking antibiotics that your body doesn't really need can be harmful. After each antibiotic, your child is more likely to have resistant germs in his or her nose. If your child gets infected again, it's more likely to be with these resistant germs. Resistant germs aren't killed by the usual antibiotics. If your child gets infected with a resistant germ, it might be necessary to use more expensive and powerful antibiotics or even antibiotics that have to be given in the hospital. Since a runny nose generally gets better by itself, it's best to wait and take antibiotics only when necessary.

How can I treat The Common Cold?

Runny nose, cough, fever, headache and muscle aches may bother your child during a cold, but medicine won't make them go away faster. Using a cool mist vaporizer or giving your child an over-the-counter nasal decongestant in the form of a nose drop or nose spray, may help. It is very important to note that the nasal decongestant must not be used for longer than a week at a time. Using them for longer periods of time will cause the nose to block up when the medication is stopped.

The most important part of the treatment is to ensure that the nose is clear and that the child is taking fluids and feeds.

The use of combination cough and cold medications are not safe in children under 2 years of age and they should not be used. They have no benefit in the treatment of a cold as they do not help your child to get better faster. Over the counter cough and cold remedies have side effects such as disturbed sleep, unusual movements & hallucinations. Check with your doctor to see which medicines are okay to use.

When is it more than a Cold?

The Common Cold follows this 10 day course and is generally not a serious illness although the nasal congestion and cough can be very troublesome especially for young children. Despite the nasal congestion they do not have difficulty breathing if the nose is cleaned out. If you watch your child breathing you will see that there is no sucking in between the ribs or under the ribs with breathing and there is no rapid breathing. Breathing is not an effort for them.

Warning sings of the Cold being something else!

- A fever of $>38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ lasting for more than 2 days
- Poor feeding when the nose is clear
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Difficulty breathing and rapid breathing
- Noisy breathing: grunting, whistling or wheezing
- Overly sleepy or listless

This information provides a general overview on Coughs, Colds & Snotty Noses and may not apply to everyone. Talk to your family doctor to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject.

