

Upper Respiratory Illness

An Upper Respiratory Illness or the common cold is a viral respiratory illness. Treating your child's cold with proper over the counter cold medications will help your child be more comfortable during the duration of his/her cold. There is no "cure" for the common cold; we only have cold medications that temporarily relieve the cold symptoms.

How do I choose a cold medication that is right for my child's symptoms?

For children 6 months - 2 years of age other than Benedryl, we do not recommend over the counter cold medications. It is important to treat the symptom that your child is suffering from. Many cold medications are multi-symptom; therefore your child may not need much of the medication that is being given. It is important to know the symptoms that make up your child's illness. Use this chart to guide you in choosing a proper treatment to make your child more comfortable during his/her cold. Always look at the type of medication that you are giving your child. All cold medications are labeled and describe the class of medication and the generic name or active ingredients that it contains.

SYMPTOM	CLASS OF MEDICATION	GENERIC NAME	BRAND NAME
Runny Nose	Antihistamines to dry up the runny nose	Diphenhydramine	Benadryl®
Nasal Congestion - only greater than 2 years of age	Decongestants to help open nasal passages	Pseudoephedrine, Phenylpropanolamine	Sudafed® Triaminic® PediaCare®
Cough	Antihistamine to dry the drainage that may be causing the cough	Diphenhydramine	Benadryl®
Chest Congestion	Expectorant to loosen cough	Guaifenesin	Robitussin®
Fever and Sore Throat	Pain Reliever and Fever Reducers	Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen	Tylenol® or Motrin®

Read the following descriptions to familiarize yourself with the function of each class of medication:

For Children 6 months - 2 years

Antihistamines: A drying agent. Will stop runny nose and water eyes. Will help alleviate coughs caused by posterior nasal drainage. Will also stop allergic reactions. May cause irritability or excitability.

For Children over 2 years of age

Cough suppressants: Generally not helpful in alleviating cough. Only recommended for children over 2 years of age.

Expectorants: Thins thick secretions. Will help non-productive coughs by making the secretions thinner so that you can cough out some of the congestion. Also may make nasal drainage temporarily increased as it thins the nasal and chest secretions.

Decongestants: Opens nasal passages to help breathing. Many decongestants may cause excitability in many children. Only use decongestants when necessary.