

Treatment for the Common Cold

My child has a virus, how can I help her feel better?

While there is no "cure" for infections caused by a virus, there are things you can do to help your child feel better until the virus runs its course:

To relieve stuffy nose

- Thin the mucus using saline nose drops. Ask your pediatrician which ones to use. Never use nonprescription nose drops that contain any medicine.
- Clear your baby's nose with a suction bulb. Squeeze the bulb first, then gently put the rubber tip into one nostril and slowly release the bulb. This suction will draw the clogged mucus out of the nose. This works best for babies younger than 6 months.
- Use a cool-mist humidifier in your child's room. This helps to moisten the air and clear your child's nasal passages. Be sure to clean the humidifier often.

To relieve fever

- Give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Ask your pediatrician for the right dosage for your child's age and size. Don't give aspirin to your child because it has been associated with Reye syndrome, a disease that affects the liver and the brain. Check with your pediatrician first before giving any other cold medicines.

To prevent dehydration

- Make sure your child drinks a lot of fluids. He may want clear liquids rather than milk or formula. He may eat more slowly or not feel like eating because he is having a hard time breathing.

If your child's virus doesn't seem to go away, or seems to get worse, call your pediatrician. Your pediatrician will let you know what the best treatment is for your child. In some cases, all you may need to do is make sure your child gets plenty of rest and eats a balanced diet. Other times, your child may need medicine. Most infections can be treated at home. However, if an infection becomes severe, your child may need to see the pediatrician and, rarely, go to the hospital.

Prevention

Though there is no way to keep your child away from germs, there are some steps you can take to help prevent them from spreading, including

- Make sure everyone washes his or her hands. Regular hand washing helps prevent the spread of germs.
- Keep your child away from anyone who has a cold, fever, or runny nose.
- Avoid sharing eating utensils, drinking cups, toothbrushes, washcloths, or towels with anyone who

has a cold, fever, or runny nose.

- Wash dishes and utensils in hot, soapy water.
- Don't smoke around your child.

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Healthcare professionals may [order this publication](#) in multi-copy packs.

Parents can find more information on this topic in *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*. To order a copy of this book visit the [AAP Bookstore](#).

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.