

## COLDS

Cold symptoms (runny nose or stuffy nose, watery eyes and cough) are exceedingly common in infants and children.

Nasal stuffiness and noisy breathing in newborns are usually the result of a small amount of mucous in normal narrow nasal passages, often due to “spit-up” that goes from the throat to the back of the nose. If there is no fever, fussiness, difficulty breathing or feeding, or other signs of more serious illness, stuffiness in the newborn can be ignored. Signs of more serious illness in the newborn require a prompt phone call and/or visit to our office.

Viruses can cause cold symptoms in children of any age. Upper respiratory infections are most frequent in the 1 to 6 year age group. Most of the viral culprits cause uncomfortable but harmless short-lived illnesses accompanied by fever and occasionally sore throat in the first one to 3 days. Fever is not in itself a sign of a dangerous illness. As long as the fever is present early in the illness, goes away after the first few days, and does not re-appear during the remainder of the illness, it is sufficient to make your child as comfortable as possible (for example, using Tylenol or Motrin for pain or fever) and await the natural resolution of symptoms. Colds can take as long as 1 to 2 weeks to resolve. If this course is complicated by prolonged or recurrent fever, ear pain, breathing difficulty or other disturbing signs, call us to make arrangements for your child to be seen in our office.

Airborne allergens like dust and pollens, and chemical irritants like cigarette smoke can cause symptoms similar to a cold. It can often be difficult to distinguish short allergic episodes from viral infections. The treatment and complications are very similar.

There are several things you can do to make a baby with a cold more comfortable.

- You can use a vaporizer at night.
  - ✓ If you use a cold-water vaporizer it should be cleaned with bleach daily. Add one tablespoon of bleach to the water and run the machine for 20 minutes with a towel around the vents. The towel prevents the bleach from affecting your household furnishings.
  - ✓ If you use a steam vaporizer make sure it is placed out of reach of the baby.
- You can let a small baby sleep in an infant seat to make breathing easier.
- A nasal aspirator can be used to clean the nose of mucous.
- Offer extra fluids.
- Tylenol (Acetaminophen) can be given to relieve discomfort.
- Decongestants and antihistamines probably do not decrease the symptoms of a cold and do not cure it. Because of their side effects in young children, we do not recommend their use.
- **If your baby is under one month of age or has a temperature over 101 F, call us.**