



The MommyDocs Guide to Colds in Children

****Children can develop colds six to eight times per year, and they are often concentrated during the school year.**

****Colds are caused by viruses, and therefore do not respond to antibiotics (which treat bacteria).**

****The first line of defense against colds is prevention.**

****Wash hands with soap thoroughly and often, and/or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers**

****Teach children to cough and sneeze into their arms and elbows, not their hands**

****Avoid sick contacts, and if a child is sick, he should be kept home.**

****Despite preventative efforts, parents are often faced with the challenge of taking care of a child with a cold.**

****In January 2008, the FDA issued a recommendation that infants and children under the age of 2 not be given any over the counter (OTC) cough or cold medications. These products may include one or more of the following: decongestants, antihistamines, expectorants, and cough suppressants.**

****In October 2008, the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) announced that they will modify the labels of OTC cough and cold medicines. The labels will read “do not use” in children under 4 years of age. They will also be adding new child-resistant packaging and measuring devices. The FDA supports these voluntary actions.**

****The FDA has not yet made its final recommendation on the use of cough and cold meds in children ages 2-11 (but does support the recent voluntary label change by many drug makers, which reads “do not give” to children**

under 4 year of age); a formal recommendation is pending. Be aware that these medications have potentially serious side effects and their effectiveness has not been shown. The MommyDocs do not recommend these products in children under 6 years old. Parents of children in the age group where formal FDA recommendations have not yet been made and who choose to give OTC medications must pay close attention to:

- **Dosing instructions (medications will soon read “do not use” in children under 4 years of age due to a voluntary label change by many drug makers) (see above for more details)

- **Active ingredients in the products; there are often multiple ingredients, and it is imperative not to duplicate what is given.

- **Proper dosing; medication should be accurately measured out, with either an oral dosing syringe, or dropper provided with the medication.

- **Properly storing medication to avoid accidental ingestion.

- **The fact that these medications do not cure colds.

**Fortunately, there are alternatives to help provide comfort and symptom relief.

- **Give lots of TLC

- **Give plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

- **Make sure your child is resting and getting enough sleep.

- **For stuffy noses (nasal congestion) in babies, consider using nasal saline drops and a bulb syringe to help loosen and clear mucus. For older children, you can use a nasal saline spray.

- **If your child has fever associated with the cold, you can consider giving an antipyretic (anti-fever medication) such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol or Fever-all) or Ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil). **Reminder: For all children 3 months of age and under with a temperature of 100.4°F or 38.0°C or higher you must contact your physician right away. Avoid giving medication to a baby under 3 months of age before talking to the doctor.**

- **Humidify the air.

**Humidifiers increase moisture in the air. Increased moisture helps to:

- **Provide overall comfort

- **Keep the nasal passages and other mucous membranes moist, which otherwise may be dry and irritated.

- **Break up mucus, allowing for easier clearance.
- **Improve cilia motility, which helps the immune system fight infection

**Two types of humidifiers are available, and they are equally effective at humidifying the air.

**Cool mist: For babies and children, cool mist humidifiers are recommended.

**Warm mist: this type of humidifier works by boiling the water, and that kills germs, but the hot water poses a safety concern for children.

**In adolescents and adults, both the cool mist and warm mist humidifiers may be used—it's really a matter of personal preference.

**Make sure all vaccinations are up to date, including the yearly flu vaccine.

Keep in mind that **herbal supplements should not be given to children. Vitamins should only be given under the direction of the pediatrician.

**If at any point a parent or caregiver is concerned about a child's symptoms, the physician should be contacted. Some warning signs may include (list is not all inclusive):

- **Temperature of 100.4°F or 38.0°C in a child 3 months or younger, or persistent fever in any child
- **Difficulty breathing
- **Decreased fluid intake
- **Decreased urine output
- **Persistent sore throat
- **Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- **Lethargy
- **Unusual rash
- **Parental concern in general