

# cma

CHILDREN'S MEDICAL ASSOCIATES  
OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, P.C.

# Colds/Upper Respiratory Infection

**Colds, or viral upper respiratory infections, are extremely common in infants and children.**

The average number of colds per year is from 3-10, each lasting up to 14 days for a possible total of 140 days per year with cold symptoms.

The common cold completes its natural course in 10-14 days and management is focused on relief of symptoms which include:

- Nasal discharge (often yellow or green)
- Nasal congestion
- Scratchy/sore throat
- Tiredness and aches
- Post nasal drip
- Headache
- Cough
- Sneezing
- Decreased appetite
- Fever (greater than 100.5)
- Irritability
- Decreased sleep
- Slight eye discharge without redness
- Hoarseness

Best therapies include humidified air, saline nasal drops (and bulb suctioning, if needed), positioning with the head elevated, and increased fluid intake.

In adolescents and adults, decongestants occasionally help symptoms; in infants and toddler, studies show cold preparations are no better than placebo. These products will not prevent ear infections.

If cold preparations are used, single ingredient products are recommended to decrease the risk of both adverse effects and overdose. (Data from the 2000 annual report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers indicate there were 61,034 overdoses in children younger than 6 years of age due to cough and cold preparations.) This includes not using cough/cold preparations that contain acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin).

If your child has a fever or is uncomfortable, then give either acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

**COLDS ARE MOST COMMONLY SPREAD FROM NASAL SECRETIONS. REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN.**

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