

The Common Cold:



Symptoms: The common cold is caused by a variety of viruses, most commonly rhinovirus, and is typically characterized by nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, and occasionally cough. These viruses are spread through contact with an infected person's nasal or respiratory secretions. They typically last 5-7 days, but cough can linger for two to three weeks.

Treatment: Since colds are caused by viruses, antibiotics will not treat the symptoms, and are not indicated. The goal for treating colds is to treat the discomfort of the symptoms, such as nasal congestion, cough, and body aches. There are over the counter (OTC) medications to treat these symptoms, but the

FDA has determined that they are not safe for children under four years of age. Furthermore, studies show that common household remedies such as steam vaporizers and honey (if the child is over one year of age), as well as Tylenol or Ibuprofen, are just as effective as these OTC preparations without the potentially serious side effects of these medications.

When to schedule a visit: If you think your child has a cold, you should try the above-mentioned remedies. You should schedule an appointment in our office if you think your child's symptoms are worsening instead of improving after a few days, or if you think he or she is having a hard time staying hydrated. You should either contact us immediately or go to the emergency room if you think your child is having difficulty breathing.

A note on prevention:



The best way to prevent the spread of these viruses is to wash hands and to cover your mouth or nose with your elbow when coughing and sneezing. Despite these precautions, most of us and our children will weather a few viral infections over the next few months. Remember the importance of supportive measures such as keeping your child hydrated and treating the discomfort with either Tylenol or Ibuprofen (if your child is over six months of age). Fever, while an indicator of illness, is not an emergency (unless your child is under 2 months of age or immunocompromised) and does not in and of itself require a visit to the doctor or the emergency room. A fever is defined as 100.4 or above, and there is no temperature that by itself requires a visit to the emergency room.

High fevers in children often correspond to relatively benign viral illnesses.

Finally, although we have few treatments to eradicate viruses themselves, we do have a vaccine to prevent one of the most common, and one that can cause significant health issues. That is influenza. We recommend that all children six months of age and older receive the flu vaccine. The injection is available to all children over six months of age. The first year a child receives the flu vaccine he or she will require two injections, spaced at least thirty days apart. Your child may receive these vaccines during a well visit, or during one of our flu clinics, the dates of which are on our website. If you have any questions about the vaccine, please do not hesitate to ask one of us. CDC.gov is also a very informative website.