

Woodburn Pediatric Clinic

TREATMENT OF COLDS

Viral respiratory tract infections (common cold) are common illnesses that may last for 1-2 weeks. Remember, the influenza vaccine (“flu shot”) prevents influenza (a severe type of cold), but does not prevent the colds caused by the many other respiratory viruses. Viral illnesses do not respond to antibiotics, so treatment of colds is directly at symptoms to make the child more comfortable while he fights off the illness.

Complications (such as ear infections, sinus infections and pneumonia) are frequent, especially in pre-school children. When a complication develops, an antibiotic may be necessary.

Treatment consists of:

- Plenty of FLUIDS – especially water will keep the child hydrated.
- A VAPORIZER (cool mist) at night often helps to break up congestion and loosens the cough.
- A NASAL BULB SYRINGE is helpful in young infants to clean the nostrils of mucus. This is especially important before feeding and before sleeping.
- A couple of drops of SALINE SOLUTION (1/4 tsp. salt in 1 cup of warm water) before suctioning will loosen thick mucus.
- ACETAMINOPHEN (Tylenol) may be given every 4 hours if the child is feverish (over 101) or IBUPROFEN (ADVIL, Motrin, etc.) can be used every 6-8 hours.
- Avoid cough and cold medicines. Most don’t work, and they may actually be dangerous and contribute to complications.
- Giving the child a bath will not make him worse, but will make him clean and often comfortable.

The child should be seen in the clinic 503-981-5348 if:

- There is a high fever. (a child under 2 months should be seen if the temperature is over 100 degrees).
- Fever lasts more than 4-5 days.
- There is difficulty breathing or vomiting or earache etc.
- There is a worsening cough, or if coughing at night keeps the child awake.
- Cold symptoms are getting worse after a week or two, or lasts more than 2-3 weeks.
- The child looks or acts sicker that you think he should with a cold.

School age children may return to school when:

- Fever has been gone for at least 24 hours.
- There are no symptoms (such as bad cough or diarrhea) that would pose a risk of spreading infection to other children.

