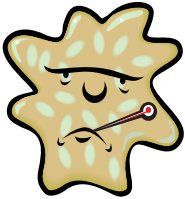


# Suggestions for Children With Viral Respiratory Illnesses

New York State Department of Health – New York State Wise Antibiotics Information Team

## Symptoms

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- Cold
- Sore Throat
- Cough
- Runny Nose
- Other

Your child has symptoms which can be associated with an illness caused by a virus. The suggestions below will help your child feel better while his/her body's defenses are combating the virus. Most viral infections last 7-10 days.

## General Instructions

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### Your Child Should:

- ⇒ **Rest:** At home until he/she feels better. It is important for your child to get 8 - 10 hours of sleep when he/she is sick.
- ⇒ **Drink** at least four 8-ounce glasses (1 quart) of water per day. Homemade soups have some beneficial effects.
- ⇒ **Gargle** to soothe a sore throat. A gargle can be made with 1/2 teaspoon of table salt in 8 ounces of warm water. Gargling works by warming and cleansing the throat and tonsils. Sore throats can also be soothed with ice chips, sore throat spray, or lozenges in children 5 years or older.
- ⇒ **Use a Cool-Mist Humidifier** to relieve congestion and moisten dry mucous membranes. Use and clean humidifier per manufacturer's instructions to prevent the growth of mold and bacteria.
- ⇒ **Use a Steam Vaporizer** to promote drainage of nasal sinuses. Place vaporizer a safe distance from the child to prevent burns. Due to the intense heat, use is not recommended with younger children. Use and clean vaporizer per manufacturer's instructions.
- ⇒ **To prevent the spread of illness**, encourage frequent handwashing and good respiratory etiquette, such as covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.



## Over the Counter Medicines

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Cold and flu medicines relieve symptoms but they do not actually kill viruses. Although you can't kill a virus, you can take medicines that help relieve symptoms:

- ⇒ **Petroleum jelly** or skin lotion can help ease a chapped nose or lips.
- ⇒ **Lozenges or cough drops** may soothe a sore or dry throat. Do not give these products to a child aged 5 or younger.
- ⇒ **Pain relievers**, such as acetaminophen, or ibuprofen, relieve head and body aches, sore throats, and fevers. **Please follow package directions.**
  - Ibuprofen should be taken after meals or with food to minimize stomach irritation.
- ⇒ **If a fever** is less than 101° F, bringing it down is not necessary; a mild fever is one of the body's ways to kill the virus and it is not dangerous.



**Never give aspirin to children or teenagers. It can cause Reye's Syndrome, a rare, but often fatal condition.**



- ⇒ **Oral decongestants** can help relieve a stuffy nose, ear congestion, or a popping feeling in the ears. **Carefully follow package directions.**
- ⇒ **Nasal decongestants** (nose sprays or drops) can relieve a stuffy nose. They should be used sparingly, and not for more than 3 days because the nasal congestion can become worse. They should not be given to children younger than 6 months of age.
- ⇒ **Cough syrups** should be used only for certain kinds of coughs. See below for details. **Carefully read package directions.**
  - Coughing is useful because it removes secretions from the throat. If the cough is wet and productive (coughing up secretions), a cough suppressant should not be used unless the cough is preventing your child from sleeping. Instead, have your child suck on hard candies or drink a hot liquid.
- ⇒ **Antihistamines** are not very effective for treating cold or flu symptoms and may cause drowsiness and thicken the secretions that are trying to be dislodged. For colds and flu, it is better to use a regular decongestant. **Carefully follow package directions.**

## Antibiotics

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**Antibiotic Treatment Does Not Cure Viral Infections.**

**Antibiotics Do Not Kill Cold Or Flu Viruses Or Help Aches, Pains Or Fever.**

**Taking Antibiotics When Not Needed May Be Harmful.**

**If Your Practitioner Prescribes An Antibiotic, Always Give Your Child All The Antibiotic, Even If He/She Feels Better.**

**Use Medicines As Directed By Your Health Care Practitioner Or Package Directions.**

## Follow Up

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You should contact your health care practitioner whenever your child is sick. The suggestions given above should never replace the advice of your healthcare practitioner.

Endorsed by The New York State Department of Health and the New York State Association of School Nurses. This form may be reprinted.

For more information about antibiotic resistance visit our website at:  
[www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us) - Click on Diseases and Topics, then on Antibiotic Resistance

OR

Email us: [abxuse@health.state.ny.us](mailto:abxuse@health.state.ny.us)