

Natural Remedies for Kids

- In January 2008, the Food & Drug Administration announced that kids under 2 years old should not use over-the-counter cold medicines.
- Earlier, in 2007, scientists warned the government not to give these medicines to kids under 6 years old, and stated they are not helpful for kids under 12.
- These medicines were not tested on children when they were invented. Now we think they're not very useful, too expensive, and have bad side effects.
- A lot of parents want to go back to home remedies, and that's what this handout is about.

When to call your doctor:

1. If you are worried that your child needs medical attention, or you have any questions.
2. All-over body rash, or a rash that looks like little bruises on part of the body.
3. Headache or neck pain that doesn't get any better with pain relievers.
4. Working hard just to breathe.
5. Dehydration (see below).

Dehydration: A word of caution!

One of the biggest dangers to sick babies and kids is dehydration, which means getting dried out.

- Your baby might be dehydrated if s/he has less than six wet diapers in 24 hours.
- Your child might be dehydrated if s/he has darker urine and a dry or sticky tongue.

This can happen especially if a baby or child has vomiting for more than 3 days, diarrhea for more than 5 days, or has not been eating or drinking much for a day or two.

Call your doctor if you think your baby/child is dehydrated!

Fever = Temperature over 100.3 degrees

Rule #1: You must buy a thermometer - for rectal or oral use. If the temperature is high under the arm, recheck it rectally or by mouth. (Rectal is easier for babies; by mouth is easier for kids.)

Rule #2: If your baby is **less than three months old**, and they are sick with a **fever over 100.3 degrees**, they must be seen by your personal doctor or an emergency room doctor immediately.

Having a fever does not cause brain damage or other permanent harm. Fever is the body's way of cooking out the germs. Kids don't need treatment specifically for fever, except to keep them comfy!

- ✓ First, cool off the child's body: get them naked, give them a cool bath, and fan them.
- ✓ Never put rubbing alcohol on their skin. It cools the skin too quickly. Use plain water.
- ✓ Don't give aspirin or baby aspirin to sick kids. It can cause a bad reaction (Reye's syndrome).
- ✓ You can give acetaminophen ("tylenol") and ibuprofen ("motrin") to bring down a fever. You can give them like it says below, OR give acetaminophen first, then 3 hours later give ibuprofen, then 3 hours later repeat the acetaminophen, and so on, alternating every 3 hours. Your child won't overdose if you alternate them.

*Estimate the dosage if your child is in between these weights.
For bigger kids taking chewables, follow the directions on the package.*

Child's weight (in pounds)	Acetaminophen infant drops, 100 mg / mL every 4 hours	Acetaminophen kids' syrup, 160 mg/ tsp every 4 hours	Baby ibuprofen 40 mg / mL every 6 hours	Kids' ibuprofen 100 mg / tsp every 6 hours
6	0.4 mL	-	-	-
11	0.8 mL	1/2 tsp	1.25 mL	1/2 tsp
17	1.2 mL	3/4 tsp	1.88 mL	3/4 tsp
22	1.6 mL	1 tsp	2.5 mL	1 tsp
28	-	1¼ tsp	-	1¼ tsp
33	-	1½ tsp	-	1½ tsp
40	-	1¾ tsp	-	1¾ tsp

Feed a cold and starve a fever?

Kids with colds and with fevers all need fluids and nourishment.

- ✓ Try hot chicken soup with cayenne or black pepper and garlic in it. Vegetarian kids can have hot miso soup with pepper and garlic in it. Both are high in protein, and "warm up" the immune system.
- ✓ Try popsicles for kids with no appetite. You can make your own popsicles out of juice, tea, jello water, etc. If you don't have popsicle molds, you can freeze it in little cups with spoons sticking out of them. Let them thaw a little to get them out of the cups.
- ✓ Nursing babies should keep nursing. Mother's milk has protective immune factors in it.

How to Rest - Please Read!

Sick babies need to stay within arm's reach of a caring adult at all times (nighttime, too).

Sick children need to stay home from school, in bed or on the couch, resting quietly - not playing video games, not working on projects, not texting or web-surfing. Make the environment somewhat boring. Encourage sleep.

See the end of this handout for how to tell when a child can return to school/daycare.

Stuffy Nose

Elevation and moisture: Put rolled-up towels or stuffed animals under the mattress, so your child's head and chest are elevated while sleeping. Run a vaporizer in the room, if possible.

Salt water drops: Dissolve 1/8 tsp salt in 1/2 cup warm water. Lay child across your lap, face up, with head tilted slightly back. Using a bulb syringe or dropper, drip warm salted water into one nostril at a time (3-5 drops for a baby, 1/4 tsp or so for a schoolchild). Child will think they're drowning, but they're not! After a moment, sit the child back up and let the water run out. Repeat on other side. Can give drops 3-4 times daily as needed. (Salt water dissolves crusty mucus. Use it to wash handkerchiefs, too. Note: child will swallow a few drops of salt water, and may even inhale a drop and cough; it will not harm them. Remember, tears are salt water, too - very safe.)

Vick's: Putting Vick's, Metholatum, or other aromatic ointment into the nostrils or on the upper lip can be too harsh for young children's skin. However, you can apply a thin layer to the chest and/or throat overnight, covered with a t-shirt - the vapors will loosen the nose congestion. (Note: active ingredients are usually camphor from the laurel tree, menthol from peppermint, eucalyptus, cedar, and nutmeg. They may also contain petrolatum and turpentine. See below for homemade.)

Vapor rub: 1/4 cup olive oil + 1/4 tsp eucalyptus oil + 1/8 tsp peppermint oil + 1/8 tsp thyme oil (use essential oils from a natural-foods grocery or apothecary). Shake well in a bottle or small jar. Apply a thin layer to the chest and/or throat overnight, covered with a t-shirt - the vapors will loosen the nose congestion.

Sore throat

Note: Children under 1 year old should not have honey, as they can get sick from botulism spores, if these are present in the honey. Older children, with more sophisticated immune systems, are not considered at risk.

Under 1 year old, substitute corn syrup (which is processed to kill all spores).

Honey-lemon tea: 1 tsp honey + 1 tsp fresh-squeezed lemon juice in 1 cup boiling water; cool til drinkable. (Honey coats the throat, lemon cuts the phlegm.)

Honey-lemon-spice tea: 1 tsp honey + 1 tsp fresh-squeezed lemon juice + cinnamon (pinch of powder or a small stick) + ginger (pinch of powder or small slice of fresh) + cloves (tiny pinch of powder or one whole clove), in 1 cup boiling water; cool til drinkable. Strain through clean fabric or coffee filter before drinking, if using powders; otherwise, spoon out the solids. (Honey coats the throat, lemon cuts the phlegm, spices numb a sore throat and increase circulation to the area.)

Slippery elm tea: 1 Tb slippery elm bark shreds (or 1 tsp powder) in 1 cup boiling water; cool until lukewarm. Stir and pour through tea strainer. Flavor is bland-sweet; can add honey or lemon as desired. (Slippery elm produces a soothing gel which coats the throat.)

Honey-lemon garlic syrup: 1 cup honey + juice of 1/2 fresh lemon + 3 cloves fresh garlic. Blend in a blender until smooth. Strain through gauze and store well sealed. Keeps for approx 3 months in refrigerator. Give by the teaspoonful for sore throat. (Garlic is antiseptic, mildly anesthetic, and increases circulation to the area.)

Salt water gargle: 2-3 tsp of table salt dissolved in a glass of water (approx 1 and 1/2 cups), gargle repeatedly til used up. Make sure child can gargle before trying this. Do not swallow - it can be nauseating! (Salt reduces swelling of the inflamed throat tissues.)

Cough

Note: Children under 1 year old should not have honey, as they can get sick from botulism spores, if these are present in the honey. Older children, with more sophisticated immune systems, are not considered at risk. Under 1 year old, substitute corn syrup (which is processed to kill all spores).

Herbal steam bath: Boil 4 cups water. Put it in another pot (flat-bottomed for stability) and add 3 drops eucalyptus oil OR tea tree oil OR lavender oil. Take the pot to a table and arrange chairs so child can sit comfortably with face over the steam, but safely away from the hot water. Lay a dry towel over the child's head and the pot to create a mini-sauna. Child should keep eyes closed to avoid stinging. Allow child to breathe steam as long as he/she wants - the longer the better. (Can save the water, re-heat in a microwave dish, and re-use.) If they're uncomfortable with the towel, they can just breathe the steam. Good for chest congestion as well as cough.

Honey tea and/or syrup (recipes above) are good for cough as well as sore throat.

Honey-onion syrup: An overnight recipe. Thinly slice a peeled onion (red is mildest). Layer the slices in a bowl or jar (not metal), alternating with drizzled honey (or may substitute sugar, believe it or not). The general rule is "equal parts onion and honey/sugar" - you don't have to be precise. Cover the bowl as tightly as possible and let it sit at room temperature for 8 hours. (The sweetener will draw the juice from the onion by osmosis, producing a syrup.) Strain. Keeps in refrigerator 3 days maximum. Give 1 tsp up to 3 times a day for cough and congestion. (Onion, like its cousin garlic, has antiseptic/antimicrobial properties; it also thins phlegm, acting as an expectorant. Standard dose for adult male is an onion a day!)

Mustard plaster: Not for babies or those with very sensitive skin! You will need two chest-sized pieces of fabric. Mix 1 Tb powdered dry mustard + 1/4 cup flour. Stir in hot water to a paste. Smear one piece of cloth with mustard paste, then cover with second piece of cloth. Apply to child's dry chest, making sure the plaster isn't too hot to the touch. Can cover with a tight-fitting t-shirt.

Check the skin every few minutes; when it starts to redden (time depends on the spiciness of the mixture and skin sensitivity), remove the plaster and apply a little olive oil or petroleum jelly to the skin, to hold in the heat. Warning: leaving it on too long will result in blistering. Apply the plaster twice a day (may re-use once). (Mustard heats up the area, increasing circulation and helping to clear infection.)

Croup

Croup is a special kind of cough, described as "brassy," "bell-like," or "like a seal barking." It's caused by a virus that results in sudden airway swelling. It usually occurs on cold nights, in babies and preschoolers, causing anxiety, which makes the cough worse... So rule #1 is, stay calm, and calm your child. Croup calls for calm, quick action:

- **Cold air:** If it's cold outside, put on your coat, wrap up the child in blankets, and take him/her outside. Breathing the cold air for 10-15 minutes may help, by reducing the airway swelling.
- **Steam bath:** take your child into the bathroom, shut the door and the shower curtain, and run the shower as hot as possible. Do not get in the shower! Keep your child from touching the hot water. Your goal is to fill the room with steam, and let the child breathe it for 10-15 minutes.
- **Prevention:** Once you have stopped the initial attack, run a vaporizer in the child's room to keep the air moist, hopefully preventing another attack.

Croup danger signs: Get to emergency services immediately if...

- If there's a chance your child could have inhaled an object or some food.
- If your child is in severe distress: drooling, turning blue around the lips, using extra muscles around the ribs and neck, and working hard to breathe.
- If home treatments produce no improvement after 20 minutes, or if they seem to make your child worse.

The emergency department will have special medicines for these rare cases of severe respiratory distress.

Vomiting/ diarrhea

Your main worry here is dehydration (see p. 1). Please be vigilant about giving nourishing fluids to your baby/child after every episode.

Nursing baby: Continue breastfeeding! - especially after each episode of vomiting or diarrhea. Mother's milk has natural immune factors that protect your baby's stomach. Human milk is considered a "clear liquid" as far as digestion is concerned.

Formula-fed baby, or toddler: You can switch to clear liquids for every other feeding:

Apple juice: dilute with equal parts of warm water. (Will not cure the illness, but is nourishing.)

Fennel seed tea: 1/2 tsp fennel seeds per cup of water. (Fennel seed settles a gassy, crampy gut.)

Electrolyte fluid: Pedialyte, etc. (Supplies lost electrolytes. Make your own by mixing 1 tsp salt and 8 tsp sugar in 5 cups water. Can use tea or barley water for part of the fluid, if you want.)

Barley water: Simmer 1/2 cup barley in 5 cups water, covered, for 2 hrs, then strain. Store in fridge. Serve lukewarm. (Provides carbohydrates; easy to digest.)

Older kids: Sometimes it will seem to help if you take your child off of solid foods, and sometimes it will not. In studies worldwide, kids do better if they continue to get full nourishment while ill.

BRAT diet: Bananas, Rice, Applesauce, Toast. (Easy to digest, and anti-diarrhetic.)

Jello water: Mix jello powder mix, or plain gelatin powder, with twice as much water as used to make jello. (Provides protein. May flavor plain gelatin by using juice or tea for some of the liquid.)

Catmint tea: Make tea of catnip combined with peppermint. (The menthol in mint is said to act as a temporary sedative to the entire digestive system. Use plain peppermint if you can't get good catnip.)

Ginger tea: Buy fresh ginger root from the produce section of your grocery store. Cut a chunk as big as a walnut (doesn't have to be exact) into slices in a mug. Cover with boiling water, then with a saucer, and allow to cool, covered, until cool enough to drink. May sweeten with honey. (Ginger root has been widely validated for nausea, from food poisoning to seasickness to chemotherapy.)

Too sick for school? (Compiled from various health-department rulebooks)

Do NOT send your child to school/daycare, if:

- ...fever over 100.3 degrees with signs of sickness
- ...a contagious sickness that is dangerous to others (e.g., flu)
- ...the school doesn't have enough staff to take care of your child while s/he's sick
- ...your child isn't able to participate because of sickness

Your child CAN stay in school, even though:

- ...Common cold (runny nose/cough) but no fever
- ...Mild fever (under 104) without signs of sickness
- ...Rash, without fever and without signs of sickness, including poison ivy/oak
- ...Fifth disease (parvo/slapped-cheek virus), but otherwise healthy
- ...Hepatitis B virus carrier state, no active infection
- ...HIV-positive, with doctor's permission

Your child can RETURN to school, when:

- Vomiting - when it stops
- Diarrhea - when it stops
- Strep throat - 24 hrs after starting antibiotics, if fever is gone
- Pink eye - as soon as treatment starts
- Herpes simplex - when cold sores have crusted over
- Staph infection/impetigo - 24 hours after starting antibiotics
- Scabies - after first treatment (recheck in a week)
- Head lice - after the first scalp treatment
- Chickenpox - ALL the spots are crusted over (~6 days)
- Measles - 4 days after start of rash
- Mumps - 9 days after start of jaw swelling
- Pertussis - after 5 days of antibiotics
- Rubella - 6 days after start of rash
- Hepatitis A - 1 week after jaundice started, if schoolkids and staff all got shots
- Tuberculosis - with doctor's permission.