



How to Feel Better

While antibiotics cannot treat infections caused by viruses, there are still a number of things you or your child can do to relieve some symptoms and feel better while a viral illness runs its course. Over-the-counter medicines may also help relieve some symptoms.

General Advice

For upper respiratory infections, such as sore throats, ear infections, sinus infections, colds and bronchitis, try the following:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Use a clean humidifier or cool mist vaporizer
- Avoid smoking, secondhand smoke and other pollutants (airborne chemicals or irritants)
- Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen to relieve pain or fever (read about what is safe to give your child)
- Use saline nasal spray or drops

Sore Throat

- Soothe a sore throat with ice chips, sore throat spray, popsicles or lozenges (do not give lozenges to young children)
- Use a clean humidifier or cool mist vaporizer
- Gargle with warm salt water
- Drink warm beverages
- Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or Naproxen to relieve pain or fever (read about what is safe to give your child)

Ear Pain

- Put a warm moist cloth over the ear that hurts
- Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or Naproxen to relieve pain or fever (read about what is safe to give your child)

Runny Nose

- Stop a runny nose in its tracks by trying the following tips:
- Get plenty of rest
- Increase fluid intake
- Use a decongestant or saline nasal spray to help relieve nasal symptoms (read about what is safe to give your child)

Sinus Pain/Pressure

- Put a warm compress over the nose and forehead to help relieve sinus pressure
- Use a decongestant or saline nasal spray
- Breathe in steam from a bowl of hot water or shower
- Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or Naproxen to relieve pain or fever (read about what is safe to give your child)

Cough

- Use a clean humidifier or cool mist vaporizer
- Breathe in steam from a bowl of hot water or shower
- Use non-medicated lozenges (do not give lozenges to young children)
- Use honey if your child is at least one year old (read about what is safe to give your child)



Over-the-Counter Medicines

For children and adults, over-the-counter (OTC) pain relievers, decongestants and saline nasal sprays may help relieve some symptoms, such as runny nose, congestion, fever and aches, but they do not shorten the length of time you or your child is sick. Remember to always use OTC products as directed. Not all products are recommended for children of certain ages.

Pain Relievers for Children

For babies six months of age or younger, parents should only give acetaminophen for pain relief. For a child six months of age or older, either acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be given for pain relief. Be sure to ask your child's healthcare professional for the right dosage for your child's age and size. Do not give aspirin to your child because of Reye's syndrome, a rare but very serious illness that harms the liver and brain. [Learn more about Reye's syndrome.](#)

Cough and Cold Medicines for Children Younger than Four Years of Age

Do not use cough and cold products in children younger than four years of age unless specifically told to do so by a healthcare professional. Overuse and misuse of OTC cough and cold medicines in young children can result in serious and potentially life-threatening side effects. Instead, parents can clear nasal congestion (snot) in infants with a rubber suction bulb. A stuff nose can also be relieved with saline nose drops or a clean humidifier or cool-mist vaporizer.

Cough and Cold Medicines for Children Older than Four Years of Age

OTC cough and cold medicines may give your child some temporary relief of symptoms even though they will not cure your child's illness. Parents should talk with their child's healthcare professional if they have any concerns or questions about giving their child an OTC medication. Parents should always tell their child's healthcare professional about all prescription and OTC medicines they are giving their child.

Source: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)