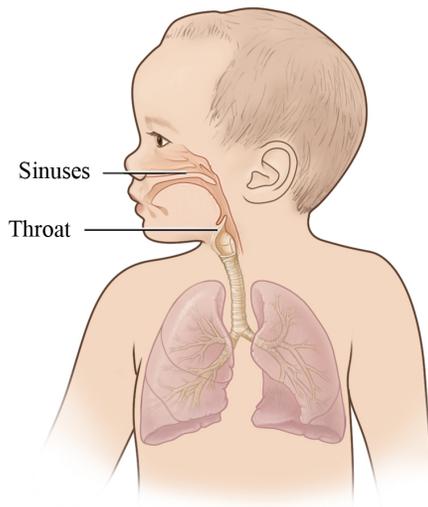


# Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) in Children



An upper respiratory infection, also called a URI, is an infection of the nose, sinuses, or throat. URIs are spread by coughs, sneezes, and direct contact. The common cold is the most frequent kind of URI. The flu and sinus infections also are URIs.

## Should your child take antibiotics for a URI?

Almost all URIs are caused by viruses. Antibiotics treat infections caused by bacteria, so antibiotics will **not** cure most URIs.

Parents may sometimes feel that they should get antibiotic treatment for their child just in case, even when the URI is caused by a virus. But having your child take antibiotics when they are not needed:

- Will not help your child get better.
- May cause some bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotics. This means antibiotics may not work as well if your child needs them later.
- Can cost a lot.
- Can cause side effects that may be dangerous, including:

- Vomiting or nausea.
- A severe allergic reaction called anaphylaxis, which needs emergency medical care right away.
- Severe diarrhea.
- A rash.

## How to care for your child at home

You can do things at home to help your child get better. With most URIs, your child should feel better in 4 to 10 days. Your child will need some extra attention and comfort when feeling sick. Here are some things that can help:

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest. Keep your child at home if he or she has a fever.
- Wash your hands and your child's hands often to avoid spreading germs.
- For a dry cough, try honey or lemon juice in hot water or tea. Do not give honey to a child younger than 1 year old. It may have bacteria that are harmful to babies.
- For a stuffy nose or congestion:
  - Use saline nose drops in each nostril, no more than 5 or 6 times a day.
  - Use a soft rubber suction bulb for babies, no more than 5 or 6 times a day.
  - Raise the head of your child's bed or crib about 1 inch. Do not do this with children less than 6 months old.
  - Use a humidifier to moisten the air in your child's room. Be sure to follow the instructions for cleaning the machine.

## Giving medicines to your child

Always follow the directions on the label or package when giving medicines to your child. Give medicines exactly as your doctor says.

- Check the label before you give over-the-counter (OTC) cough, cold, or flu medicines to a child. They may not be safe to give to young children. These medicines don't cure the infection or the cough. And they don't help your child get better faster.
- Giving your child medicines such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen may help with a fever or aches. **Do not give aspirin to**

**anyone younger than 20.** It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.

- If you are giving your child fever or pain medicine (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen), don't give your child a cold or flu medicine that contains the same ingredient. Your child could get too much medicine.
- If your doctor has decided that your child needs antibiotics, give them as directed. Do not stop using them just because your child feels better. Your child needs to take the full course of antibiotics.

## When to call your doctor

**Call 911** anytime you think your child may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- Your child has severe trouble breathing. Signs of this may include the chest sinking in, using belly muscles to breathe, or nostrils flaring while your child is struggling to breathe.

**Call your doctor now** or seek medical care right away if:

- Your child has signs of dehydration, which means that the body has lost too much fluid. These signs include sunken eyes with few tears, a dry mouth with little or no spit, and little or no urine for at least 8 hours.
- Your child has a bad headache or stiff neck with a fever.
- Your child has trouble breathing, breathes very fast, or coughs all the time.
- Your child cannot keep down medicine or liquids.
- Your child seems confused or is very hard to wake up.

Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your child has a fever for more than 3 days or is not getting better after 5 days.
- Your child has new symptoms, such as a rash, an earache, or a sore throat.



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