



common cold

The common cold occurs frequently each year in the average preschooler and young school age child. In fact, about five or six minor respiratory infections per year is within the average range of one to twelve that can be expected throughout the year. It is natural to be concerned about recurring infections but the majority will subside over a period of seven to ten days with appropriate home management. Those infections requiring additional treatment can normally be identified during the doctor's evaluation.

In its usual form, the illness is associated with fever, sore throat, sneezing, nasal discharge, cough, red eyes, headache, chills and tiredness. After three or four days, there is considerable improvement but a persistent stuffy nose, red eyes and cough may continue for several more days. This illness is caused by many types of viruses which spread quickly through communities and families each year.

The treatment is directed at relief of the symptoms. In infants, the nasal obstruction often interferes with sleeping and eating. Some simple measures will reduce this problem. A pediatric nasal decongestant solution or infant nasal aspirator can be used. If the nasal discharge is too thick, some lukewarm salt water placed in the nostrils with a dropper before the medicine or aspirator is used may help. These are best tried about 15 minutes before feedings. For older children, the doctor may suggest adult nasal decongestant solutions. During feedings, the infant's head should be elevated as this will reduce fluid congestion of the middle ear. Small four inch size blocks placed to raise the head of the bed may also be helpful during the worst part of the congestion as symptoms always seem to worsen at night time.

At the onset of the infection, the fever and the loss of appetite are often associated with irritability and odorous breath. These symptoms can be reduced by treatment with concentrated sugars (honey, clear candies, soft drinks) and a good fluid intake. This measure often reduces the crankiness.

Humidifiers will help if the house is dry. Bed rest is advisable only

if significant fever is present. Oral decongestants used without the above measure may be ineffective and as should not be used in young infants without your doctors recommendation. Fever should be managed with fluids, baths, and medicine as advised by your doctor, discussion with your doctor pertaining to the usage of cough medicine can be of assistance to permit better sleep.

Antibiotics will not influence the course of the viral illness and will not normally be suggested by your doctor unless there is strong evidence to suggest bacterial infection such as middle ear infection or pneumonia.

Keep this sheet handy as it should be referred to several times per year when the infections occur. In addition, refer to the "FEVER PDF" for further insight on suggested management with your doctors approval. If you have concerns, you brought in for an evaluation by your doctor.

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