

Adirondack Pediatrics, P.C.

PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT MEDICINE

JOHN C. BRAICO, M.D., F.A.A.P.
KATHLEEN BRAICO, M.D., F.A.A.P.
JAMES D. FUCHS, M.D., F.A.A.P.
MARY J. NEVINS, M.D., F.A.A.P.
ROGER LEVAC, M.D., F.A.A.P.
FLORENCE A. NOLAN, M.D., F.A.A.P.
ANN DYS, M.S., R.N., F.N.P.
JOYCE HECKLER, M.S., R.N., P.N.P.
JENNIFER A. SHULOFF, M.S., R.N., P.N.P.

THE LAAKSO BUILDING
84 BROAD STREET
GLENS FALLS, NEW YORK 12801

TELEPHONE (518) 798-9538
FAX (518) 798-9576

COLDS IN INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Colds ("upper respiratory infections") are caused by viruses. They spread from person to person through coughing, sneezing and close contact, being more likely to spread even before the person knows they are sick. Although different viruses cause different symptoms, so that not all colds are the same, most involve some degree of congestion, stuffy nose, sore throat, coughing and sneezing. Some involve fever, especially at the start of the illness.

Decades of research have shown that babies and young children, especially those under the age of one year, not only do not respond to the chemicals in cold remedies, but can be made very sick by them. There are case reports in the United States every year of infants who suffer heart rhythm abnormalities, seizures and even cardiorespiratory arrest as side effects of cold medicines. This is why we do not prescribe or recommend these for our youngest patients. Older children and adults may get some degree of relief from cold medicines, but there is really nothing that can shorten the usual 7-10 day course of the illness.

What can you do to help your little one feel better while nature takes its course? Most babies are going to be cranky because they don't feel good and don't understand that they will get better. You will need to hold and comfort them more than usual. Warm saline solution (available over the counter) gently placed in the nostrils can loosen mucus and help them to sneeze it out, or you to suction it. This is necessary only if baby cannot breathe well through the nose. If the air in the house is very dry, such as during the winter, a cool mist humidifier may make the child more comfortable. Acetaminophen can be used if you feel the baby is very uncomfortable or if fever is present, but will not relieve congestion or cough.

Please call us if:

An infant less than 2 months old has a temperature of more than 100.5 degrees rectally.

Fever of 101 degrees or more persists for greater than 2-3 days.

The child is in a lot of discomfort or pain.

Coughing spells occur which last several minutes or cause the child to seem "out of breathe".

"Wheezing" is continuous or the child seems to have to "work" to breathe.

Child refuses fluids for several hours, seems listless.

Any cold that lasts longer than 14 days.