

Breathe Easy about Colds or Allergic Rhinitis (Allergies)



Awareness CLINICAL SERVICES AND PATIENT CARE PROGRAMS

A COLD IS A VIRAL INFECTION of the upper respiratory tract (nose, sinuses, throat and upper airway). It is not caused by drafts or being out in the rain. It is contagious and is spread mostly by hand contact. Because there are about 200 viruses that cause colds, most healthy children get at least six colds a year.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms of a cold usually include fatigue, aches and pains, congested or runny nose, weepy eyes and a dry hacking cough with little mucous production. Fever, vomiting and loose stools are likely in younger children, but are possible at any age.

HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

A cold may last anywhere from a few days to two weeks. The worst days are the first three to four days.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

Treatment may include acetaminophen, rest and increased fluid intake. Children should stay home if a fever or continuous hacking cough is present. Children who are too uncomfortable at school should also stay home. Be sure that the child washes his hands frequently and disposes of soiled tissues quickly.

WHAT IS AN ALLERGY?

Allergic rhinitis is a congestive condition of the nose caused by exposure to allergic triggers such as dust, animals, pollen and mold. This condition may occur during certain seasons or year-round depending on the type of allergies.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The child with allergic rhinitis may experience nasal congestion and sneezing attacks, itching of the nose and eyes, red watery eyes, clear watery nasal drainage, repeated throat clearing, cough and noisy mouth breathing, popping of the ears and dark circles under the eyes.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

Treatment of allergic rhinitis may include avoiding allergic triggers, drinking plenty of fluids, taking antihistamines as directed by the child's doctor, using humidifiers and following up with the doctor to talk about ways to prevent symptoms.

COLDS AND ALLERGIES WARNING:

The parent and or doctor should be called for any respiratory difficulty, fast breathing, tightness in the chest or wheezing.

CALL 911 WHEN THERE IS A BLUE OR GRAY COLOR TO THE LIPS WITH OTHER SYMPTOMS OF BREATHING DIFFICULTY.

This general healthcare information should not be used as a substitute or in place of contacting your child's healthcare provider. If you need further assistance, call 404.250.kids to speak to a pediatric nurse. For more information check out our Web site at www.choa.org and click on "medical library," "for professionals" or "for parents."

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