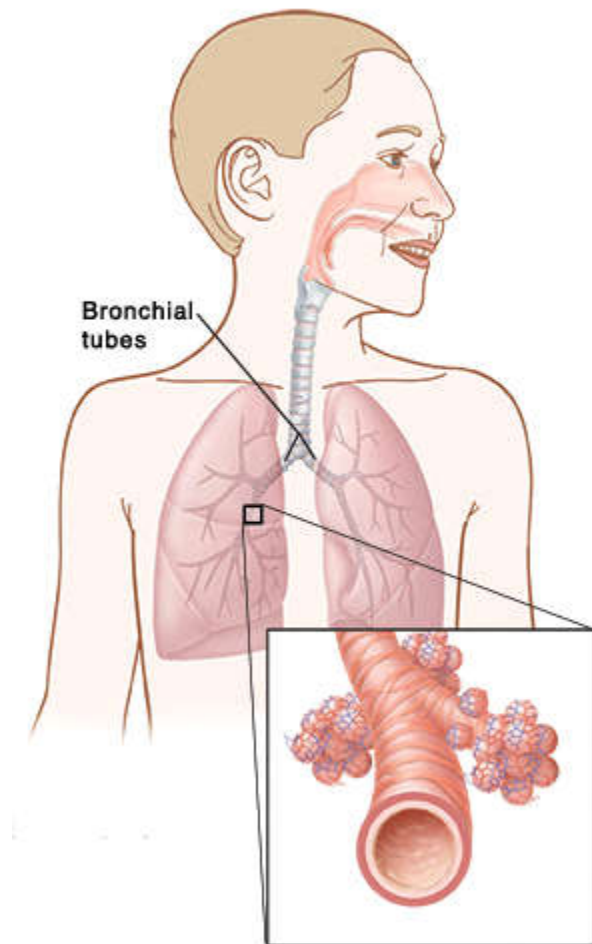


Viral Upper Respiratory Illness (Child)

Your child has a viral upper respiratory illness (URI), which is another term for the common cold. The virus is contagious during the first few days. It is spread through the air by coughing, sneezing, or by direct contact (touching your sick child then touching your own eyes, nose, or mouth). Frequent handwashing will decrease risk of spread. Most viral illnesses resolve within 7 to 14 days with rest and simple home remedies. However, they may sometimes last up to 4 weeks. Antibiotics will not kill a virus and are generally not prescribed for this condition.



Home care

- **Fluids.** Fever increases water loss from the body. Encourage your child to drink lots of fluids to loosen lung secretions and make it easier to breathe. **For infants under 1 year old,** continue regular formula or breast feedings. Between feedings, give oral rehydration solution. This is available from drugstores and grocery stores without a prescription. **For children over 1 year old,** give plenty of fluids, such as water, juice, gelatin water, soda without caffeine, ginger ale, lemonade, or ice pops.

- **Eating.** If your child doesn't want to eat solid foods, it's OK for a few days, as long as he or she drinks lots of fluid.
- **Rest:** Keep children with fever at home resting or playing quietly until the fever is gone. Encourage frequent naps. Your child may return to day care or school when the fever is gone and he or she is eating well and feeling better.
- **Sleep.** Periods of sleeplessness and irritability are common. A congested child will sleep best with the head and upper body propped up on pillows or with the head of the bed frame raised on a 6-inch block.
- **Cough.** Coughing is a normal part of this illness. A cool mist humidifier at the bedside may be helpful. Be sure to clean the humidifier every day to prevent mold. Over-the-counter cough and cold medicines have not proved to be any more helpful than a placebo (syrup with no medicine in it). In addition, these medicines can produce serious side effects, especially in infants under 2 years of age. Do not give over-the-counter cough and cold medicines to children under 6 years unless your healthcare provider has specifically advised you to do so. Also, don't expose your child to cigarette smoke. It can make the cough worse.
- **Nasal congestion.** Suction the nose of infants with a bulb syringe. You may put 2 to 3 drops of saltwater (saline) nose drops in each nostril before suctioning. This helps thin and remove secretions. Saline nose drops are available without a prescription. You can also use 1/4 teaspoon of table salt dissolved in 1 cup of water.
- **Fever.** Use children's acetaminophen for fever, fussiness, or discomfort, unless another medicine was prescribed. In infants over 6 months of age, you may use children's ibuprofen or acetaminophen. If your child has chronic liver or kidney disease or has ever had a stomach ulcer or gastrointestinal bleeding, talk with your healthcare provider before using these medicines. Aspirin should never be given to anyone younger than 18 years of age who is ill with a viral infection or fever. It may cause severe liver or brain damage.
- **Preventing spread.** Washing your hands before and after touching your sick child will help prevent a new infection. It will also help prevent the spread of this viral illness to yourself and other children.

Follow-up care

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised.

When to seek medical advice

For a usually healthy child, call your child's healthcare provider right away if any of these occur:

- A fever, as follows:
 - Your child is 3 months old or younger and has a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher. Get medical care right away. Fever in a young baby can be a

sign of a dangerous infection.

- Your child is of any age and has repeated fevers above 104°F (40°C).
- Your child is younger than 2 years of age and a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) continues for more than 1 day.
- Your child is 2 years old or older and a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) continues for more than 3 days.
- Earache, sinus pain, stiff or painful neck, headache, repeated diarrhea, or vomiting.
- Unusual fussiness.
- A new rash appears.
- Your child is dehydrated, with one or more of these symptoms:
 - No tears when crying.
 - “Sunken” eyes or a dry mouth.
 - No wet diapers for 8 hours in infants.
 - Reduced urine output in older children.

Call 911

Call 911 if any of these occur:

- Increased wheezing or difficulty breathing
- Unusual drowsiness or confusion
- Fast breathing:
 - Birth to 6 weeks: over 60 breaths per minute
 - 6 weeks to 2 years: over 45 breaths per minute
 - 3 to 6 years: over 35 breaths per minute
 - 7 to 10 years: over 30 breaths per minute
 - Older than 10 years: over 25 breaths per minute