



Management of Respiratory Tract Infections (RTIs) for Infants/Children

Respiratory tract infections (RTIs) are most commonly caused by viruses. Influenza (“the flu”), COVID-19, and a “cold” are examples of RTIs. Often, they can be managed with supportive care at home and don’t require a doctor’s visit. Antibiotics will not work for a viral infection, but there are many things that can be done to help symptoms.

The most common symptoms with RTIs are runny nose, cough, sore throat, ear pain, fever/chills, body aches, and fatigue. Babies and children may also be more irritable than usual, have interrupted sleep and/or sleep more than usual, and have a change in appetite. Viral infections generally can last 7-10 days, with some symptoms such as a lingering cough and congestion can take up to 3-4 weeks to fully settle.

Certain medical conditions and other factors can increase the risk of developing complications or more severe symptoms from a viral infection. If any of these apply to your child, please call your CVFP health team so we can review their personal risk and make a plan to care for them safely:

- Respiratory conditions: asthma, reactive airway disease
- Heart conditions, previous heart surgery
- Diabetes
- Immune compromised due to medical condition, or on immune suppressant medications
- Children under age 2

If your child has any of these symptoms, please call your CVFP health team immediately or seek urgent medical attention through ER or Urgent Care if severe:

- Altered mental state (disoriented, confused inability to waken)
- Fast breathing, trouble breathing/shortness of breath
- Bluish lips or face
- Ribs pulling in with each breath
- Chest pain, child refuses to walk
- Signs of dehydration (dry mouth, little/no tears, less urine)
- Fever and has a history of seizures
- Complaining of neck pain/stiffness
- Fever in a child < 12 weeks of age should be assessed at ER

Below is a chart that outlines things you can do at home to help your child's symptoms. If you are unsure what the right plan is for you, please call your CVFP Health Team.

Symptom	Self-care measures
Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluids: very important as illness and fever increase the need for fluids in the body. Offer small sips of fluids often. Offer a combination of fluids (water, breastmilk/milk, soup, yogurt, popsicles, Pedialyte). • To help with discomfort from a fever or aches/pains, you can give Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) or Ibuprofen if 6+ months old (Advil, Motrin). Use as directed on the package according to child's weight. If you are unsure which medication/dose is right for your child, please call your CVFP health team to review. • Acetaminophen: can be given every 4 hours, but no more than 5 doses in 24 hours. Don't give if child has known liver disease or decreased liver function. • Ibuprofen (if 6+ months old): can give every 6 hours but not more than 4 doses in 24 hours. Don't give if child is less than 6 months old, or known decreased kidney function. • Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen can be given together, or staggered at intervals • Lukewarm bath, cool face cloths • Clothing that you can add/remove layers as needed for comfort
Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medication as outlined under Fever • Offer frequent sips of cool or warm (not too hot) fluids depending on child's preference • Soft cold foods (popsicles, yogurt, ice cream) • Avoid foods that irritate the throat (e.g., spicy, acidic)
Ear pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medication as outlined under Fever • Warm compress on the affected ear(s)
Sinus congestion/ Runny nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning out child's nose before sleep, before each feed if bottle/breastfeeding, and as needed for comfort • Use an over-the-counter saline nose spray (e.g., hydraSense) or drops in each nostril. An aspiration bulb can be used to gently remove the drops and mucus, or children will often sneeze or blow the mucus out once saline is instilled. • Cool mist humidifier in child's room
Cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep child sitting or with their head at an incline • Frequent fluids to help soothe an irritated throat • Cool mist humidifier in the child's room • Over the counter cough medications can have harmful side effects in children. They are NOT recommended for children under 6 years old.

Check out these additional resources:

Alberta Health Services has a great online resource called **HEAL** with information on managing common childhood conditions, including illness

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/heal/heal.aspx>

Alberta Health Services: Respiratory Illness

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Topic/Immunization/Pages/respiratory-illness.aspx>

My Health Alberta Respiratory Problems Age 11 and Younger

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/Pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=rsp10>

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