



Idaho Falls Pediatrics

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Caring for your Infants Cold

While an **Upper Respiratory Infection (URI OR Cold)** in an older child may not be of much concern, a URI in a newborn may be very worrisome. A URI is a viral illness which means that your child does have an infection, but it is not one that will respond to antibiotics (antibiotics are only effective against bacterial infections). The only cure for a viral infection is time. As parents, our job is to give the child supportive care until the illness has resolved. Supportive care means that we treat the symptoms of the illness to make the child more comfortable while the illness is running its course. (Of note, it is not recommended to use cough and cold medicines in children less than 6 years old.)

Things to watch out for: If your child sounds congested or sounds like they are having a hard time breathing, it can be helpful to look at their ribs. If their stomach and ribs are moving comfortably and easily you can feel better about their breathing for the time being. If however, their ribs are bending, flexing, and working with each breath, and if their breathing is more than 60 times per minute then they need to be seen right away (this is called **Respiratory Distress**).

Things to do:

- 1) **Humidifiers** can be helpful. Your child has very thick secretions in their nose and throat; a humidifier can help in thinning out those secretions making it easier for your child to clear their airway of this congestion.
- 2) **Sleeping while elevated.** As adults, when we have a bad cold with lots of secretions we don't like to sleep flat on our backs either. We raise our selves up on several pillows or sleep in a chair. It is the same for our children. Smaller infants may sleep more comfortably while in their car seats, a swing, or in a bouncy chair.
- 3) **Saline drops and suctioning.** The bulb syringe that you brought home from the hospital can be very useful in these situations, but by itself it doesn't work very well. Saline solution ("little noses" or even contact solution) can help to loosen up the mucus so that you can clear it out better with the bulb syringe. 4-5 drops up one nostril, suctioned out while plugging the other nostril, and repeating on the other side can often make a big difference (even though your child will hate it).

Dehydration can also be an issue with infants in their first 4-6 months. They like to drink and breathe at the same time, and if they are having a hard time breathing, they will not want to drink. Suctioning with the saline drops can especially be helpful at these times. Watch out for the symptoms of dehydration (Decreased urine output, dry mouth, no tears, decreased activity and difficult to arouse).

As with any viral illness, the duration of the symptoms will be for 10-14 days. But the first 5-6 days should be the worst. Keep treating their symptoms and observing closely. If you see any symptoms of **respiratory distress** or **dehydration** let us know.