

RESPIRATORY ILLNESS

Respiratory illnesses occur year-round. They are more common in the Fall, when kids return to school, and peak in the

winter months, usually December and January. The commonest culprit is a virus, such as rhinovirus, adenovirus or RSV.

Symptoms and severity will vary from person to person and across different age groups. One virus may cause a trivial

head cold in an adult and then more severe symptoms in an infant or toddler. We usually categorize them as affecting the upper respiratory tract

(congestion, sneezing, runny nose, cough from post nasal drip) or lower respiratory tract (cough, respiratory distress, wheeze). Some will affect both.

Treatment is generally supportive which is another way of saying that we treat the symptoms while your body fights the infection. Antibiotics are rarely

needed unless complications, such as an ear infection, chronic sinusitis or secondary bacterial pneumonia, develop. Saline nasal drops can unblock

dried nasal secretions; a nasal aspirator can help to clear the nasal passages. Placing the head of the bed/crib at an angle can assist drainage of

upper airway secretions, helping a child sleep better. The AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) does not recommend the use of nasal

decongestants or cough syrup in young children. Honey can be used in children over the age of one year and has been shown to be more effective

than cough medicine in treating cough. If your child has asthma or has wheezed in the past, you should commence a trial of Albuterol with the onset

of cough as many will benefit, even in the absence of wheeze or respiratory distress. Tylenol and Motrin (over the age of six months) can be

administered for pain or fever.

Most respiratory viruses are contagious and are transmitted in droplet form or by direct contact. To prevent transmission, we recommend good hand

hygiene and coughing/sneezing into your arm taking care to cover both your nose and mouth. We recommended that all family members get the

annual flu vaccine.