

Helpful information provided by the Department of Emergency Medicine

## Upper Respiratory Infection (URI), Child

Your child has been diagnosed as having an upper respiratory infection (URI). An upper respiratory tract infection, or cold, is a viral infection of the air passages leading to the lungs. A cold can be spread to others, especially during the first 3 or 4 days. It cannot be cured by *antibiotics* (medications that kill germs) or other medicines. A cold usually clears up in a few days. However, some children may be sick for several days or have a cough lasting several weeks.

### HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- For pain or fever use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) as directed. **Do not give aspirin to children under 18 years of age** because of aspirin's association with Reye's Syndrome.
- To loosen mucous in your child's nose, instill 2 to 3 drops of warm water in each nostril. Wait a couple of minutes. Have your child blow their nose. Repeat this 3 to 4 times per day or as needed. If your child is too young to blow the nose, use a soft rubber suction bulb. Close one nostril and squeeze and release the bulb so that it sucks up the mucous.
- Use a cool mist humidifier to increase air moisture. This will make it easier for your child to breathe. Do not use hot steam.
- Give your child plenty of clear liquids. Give whatever is appealing to your little one.
- Have your child rest as much as possible.
- Keep your child home from day care or school until the fever is gone.

### SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- Your child develops an oral temperature above 102.0 F, or if the fever lasts more than 2 days.
- Mucous coming from your child's nose turns yellow or green. The eyes are red and matted with a yellow discharge.
- Your child's skin under the nose becomes crusted or scabbed over.
- Your child complains of an earache or sore throat, develops a rash, or is repeatedly pulling on his or her ear.

### SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

Your child has signs of water loss such as:

- Unusually sleepy
- Dry mouth
- Very thirsty
- Little or no urination
- Your child has trouble breathing or the skin or nails turn bluish.
- Your child looks and acts sicker.
- Wrinkled skin
- Dizzy
- No tears
- A sunken soft spot on the top of the head

## Upper Respiratory Infections (Cold)

You have a viral respiratory infection, or cold. The symptoms can include runny or stuffy nose, fever, sore throat and cough. Many different viruses can cause colds. **Antibiotics are not helpful in colds unless there is a secondary bacterial infection such as an ear infection, sinusitis, or bronchitis.**

Treatment to relieve cold symptoms include:

- Bed rest
- Increasing fluid intake
- Using a vaporizer
- Using oral decongestants and throat lozenges
- Using nose spray decongestants (do not use for more than 3 days)
- Taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain and fever
- To prevent the spread of colds to other family members, wash your hands often, especially after coughing or touching your nose or mouth. Use disposable tissues instead of handkerchiefs.

### CALL YOUR CAREGIVER IF:

- You have a fever lasting more than 3 days
- You have colored nasal discharge
- You have a headache or cough that lasts for more than 10 days

### SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have a high fever
- You have severe pain
- Dehydration develops
- You have shortness of breath
- You have repeated vomiting

## Upper Respiratory Infection (URI), Adult

You have an upper respiratory infection (URI). An upper respiratory tract infection, or cold, is a viral infection of the air passages leading to the lungs. It is contagious and can be spread to others, especially during the first 3 or 4 days. It cannot be cured by *antibiotics* (medications which kill germs) or other medicines. An upper respiratory infection usually clears up in a few days. However, you may be sick for several days or have a cough lasting several weeks. If a secondary *bacterial* (germs) infection occurs and you begin to develop chills and fever, you may need to be examined again. Your caregiver may wish to start you on an antibiotic.

### HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- For pain or fever use adult Tylenol® (acetaminophen) or Advil® (ibuprofen) as directed. **Do not use aspirin if under 18 years of age** because of aspirin's association with Reye's Syndrome.
- Use a cool mist humidifier to increase air moisture. This will keep secretions moist and make it easier to breathe.
- Drink plenty of clear liquids. Generally you are drinking enough fluids if the urine remains a light yellow color rather than a dark color.
- Rest as needed.
- Return to work when your temperature has returned to normal or as your caregiver advises.

### SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- You develop an oral temperature above 102.0 F or if the fever lasts more than 2 days.
- Mucous coming from your nose turns yellow or green. The eyes are red and matted with a yellow discharge.
- You develop an earache, sore throat, or rash.
- You develop a cough which is producing green, yellowish, or pus like sputum.
- You develop sore muscles, stiff neck, or severe headache not controlled with medications.
- You feel you are getting worse rather than better.