

Patient Update

Nov 18, 2022

Dear patients,

As many of you may be noticing, we are seeing a spike in respiratory illness in the community. This is a type of illness that affects the respiratory system. It is what we might normally call a “cold” or “flu”. These illnesses are especially common in children. We are receiving a high volume of calls for advice and appointments, and want to share some information to better support you and your family. In this communication, we will share:

- What you can do at home to manage an upper respiratory illness (URI)
- Infant and children pain reliever (acetaminophen and ibuprofen) shortage options
- When to call our clinics
- When to go to the ER
- Practicing good public health measures

What you can do at home to manage an upper respiratory illness (URI)

Commonly called a cold, a URI is an infection of the upper respiratory tract (nose, sinuses, throat). URIs are incredibly common in children, and will usually happen several times a year. Typical symptoms in children include stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, sneezing, cough, congestion, low fever, reduced appetite, fussiness and less energy than normal. Nasal drainage can range from clear & watery to thick & yellow or green.

Cold and flu symptoms usually get better on their own within 7 days. Commonly, a fever will last 2-4 days. The sore throat may last 5 days. Runny nose and congestion may last up to 2 weeks. A cough may last 3 weeks. The vast majority of upper respiratory tract infections are viral, and do not require antibiotics.

Unfortunately, there are no medicines that can cure a viral cold or flu or make it shorter. But you can help your child feel better with these strategies:

- Lots of fluids and rest
- Saline nose drops and/or a humidifier where they sleep
- Fever, sore throat, and muscle aches can be treated with children’s acetaminophen or ibuprofen

- Honey (for children over 12 months) is a natural way to soothe a cough. Over-the-counter cough medication is NOT recommended in children.

Infant and Children Pain-Reliever Shortage Options

With the recent shortage of infant and children's liquid and chewable tablets of acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), parents **can consider** crushing adult tablets and mixing with a small amount of juice or apple sauce for use. This can be used if the child versions are not available. **However, please note that any extended-release products that are used every 8 hours or more (e.g. Tylenol Arthritis) should NOT be used in this way.**




Acetaminophen for infants/children <12y of age:






Adult acetaminophen tablets are available over-the-counter as REGULAR 325 mg tablets OR as EXTRA STRENGTH 500mg tablets and can be crushed – **** DO NOT USE ANY EXTENDED-RELEASE PRODUCTS OF ACETAMINOPHEN**

Acetaminophen Suppositories are available over-the-counter as 120 mg, 160 mg, 325 mg and 650 mg suppositories.

The following table can be used for acetaminophen dosing. **Each dose should be given every 4 hours; maximum of 5 doses a day.**

Please note, children 3 months of age or younger with a fever should be assessed by a medical professional. Please call us to provide medical support and further directions.






Kg	Lbs.	Age	Usual Acetaminophen Dose	Suggested acetaminophen oral tablet option	Proportion of Tablet	Suggested rectal option
5.4 to 8.1	12 to 17	4 to 11 mo	80 mg	81.25 mg (1/4 tab of 325 mg tab)		80 mg (1/2 of 160 mg supp)
8.2 to 10.8	18 to 23	1 to 2 y	120 mg	125 mg (1/4 tab of 500 mg tab) OR 81.25 mg (1/4 tab of 325 mg tab) for cautious dosing	 (325mg or 500 mg)	120 mg supp
10.9 to 16.3	24 to 35	2 to 3 y	160 mg	162.5 mg (1/2 tab of 325 mg tab)		160 mg supp





16.4 to 21.7	36 to 47	4 to 5 y	240 mg	250 mg (1/2 tab of 500 mg tab) OR 243 mg (3/4 tab of 325 mg tab)	 500mg or  325mg	240 mg (2 x 120mg supp)
21.8 to 27.2	48 to 59	6 to 8 y	320 mg to 325 mg	325 mg tab		325 mg supp
27.3 to 32.6	60 to 71	9 to 10 y	325 mg to 400 mg	325 mg tab		325 mg supp
32.7 to 43.2	72 to 95	11 y	480 mg to 500 mg	500 mg tab		650 mg supp

Ibuprofen for infants/children 6 mo to <12y of age:

Adult ibuprofen tablets are available over-the-counter as 200mg, 300mg, and 400mg tablets and can be crushed – **** DO NOT USE ANY EXTENDED-RELEASE PRODUCTS OF IBUPROFEN**

The following table can be used for dosing. **Each dose should be given every 6 to 8 hours; maximum of 4 doses per day.**

Kg	Lbs.	Age	Usual Ibuprofen Dose	Suggested oral ibuprofen tablet option	Proportion of Tablet
5.4 to 8.1	12 to 17	6 to 11 mo	50 mg	50 mg (1/4 tab of 200 mg tab)	
8.2 to 10.8	18 to 23	1 to 2 y	75 to 80 mg	75 mg (1/4 tab of 300 mg tab) OR 50 mg (1/4 tab of 200 mg tab) for cautious dosing	 300mg or 200mg
10.9 to 16.3	24 to 35	2 to 3 y	100 mg	100 mg (1/2 tab of 200 mg tab)	
16.4 to 21.7	36 to 47	4 to 5 y	150 mg	150 mg (1/2 tab of 300 mg tab) OR 150 mg (3/4 tab of 200mg tab)	 300mg or  200mg

21.8 to 27.2	48 to 59	6 to 8 y	200 mg	200 mg tab	
27.3 to 32.6	60 to 71	9 to 10 y	200 mg to 250 mg	200 mg tab	
32.7 to 43.2	72 to 95	11 y	300 mg	300 mg tab OR 300mg (1 and ½ of 200mg tab)	 300mg or  200mg

We recommend the use of children pain reliever products when available. However, if caregivers need to use adult products, please double check the following:

1. Double-checking the weight and ensuring pounds are not confused with kilograms
2. Using a pill cutter to ensure better accuracy when splitting tablets and most pharmacies have these available
3. And finally, only giving the dose as frequently as instructed and as needed

If you have questions or concerns about how to use this chart, please speak with your community pharmacist or call our clinics to connect with a member of our pharmacy team who can provide additional support and guidance.

When to call our clinics

We know caring for a sick child can be stressful and overwhelming. We encourage you to see the resource below [“Family Doctor Tips on Caring for Children with Respiratory Symptoms”](#) for some tips on how to manage common cold and flu symptoms at home and when you should reach out to our clinics for an urgent appointment.

We also want to share this great resource by [Norfolk Family Medical](#) with guidance on how to manage if your child is sick from a viral illness.

When to go to the emergency room

Emergency rooms are currently facing capacity issues. However, in some cases, it is the only place to get the right care. Use this guidance to help determine if [you](#) or [your child](#) need to visit an ER.

Practice good public health measures

You can reduce your risk of infection by washing your hands frequently, wearing a mask when in indoor public spaces, and staying home when you are sick. Taking these precautions will help reduce the spread of illness and keep everyone safe. Please be reminded that masking is required in our clinics – masking reduces the spread of viruses and protects others, including our patients who have cancer, are elderly or are especially vulnerable for other reasons. Please bring your mask to your appointment and wear it throughout your visit, including when you are alone in an exam room.

We also strongly encourage that all eligible patients 6 months and older receive the COVID vaccination and the [flu vaccination](#) to protect yourselves and your loved ones. The flu shot is safe and does not cause the flu. If you still need your flu vaccine, you can call our offices to book an appointment. You can also access flu vaccines and COVID vaccines at many local [pharmacies](#) and [community clinics](#).

Our office (like most clinics at present) is handling much higher numbers of patient calls and visits than usual, including care “backlogs” from the pandemic. For some routine, non-urgent care, wait times for your appointment may be longer than usual. We are also experiencing more staff absences due to illness, resulting in longer wait times on our phone. We appreciate that you continue to be patient with us as we work hard to help you.

We are always here for you and will do everything we can to get you the care you need, when you need it.

Take care and be well,

SMHAFHT Leadership Team

Family Doctor Tips on Caring for Children with Respiratory Symptoms

Most respiratory illness in children, including colds, influenza, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) and COVID-19 can be managed at home without the need for prescription medications. However, in some cases, it is important to seek medical care.

Below, family doctors share tips on how to decide when to seek care for a respiratory illness and how to support your child at home.

Call your family doctor if your child:

- Has a fever lasting 72 hours or longer.
- Has a fever that went away for a day or longer (without fever medication) and then came back.
- Is unusually irritable and won't stop fussing, even after treating their fever.
- Has an earache lasting more than 48 hours.
- Is not eating or drinking. Note that it's normal to eat and drink less when sick. Liquids are more important than food.
- Has special needs that make caring for them more difficult.

As a parent or guardian, you know your child best. If you feel your child needs to be seen by a family doctor, please reach out for help.



Not sure what to do? Health Connect Ontario has a **symptom checker** and the option to **chat live with a nurse**. You can also **call 811** to speak with a nurse, available 24 hours a day.

Call 911 or go to the emergency department when:

- You are worried that your child is seriously ill.
- Your infant, younger than three months old, has a fever.
- Your child is struggling to breathe or is breathing faster than normal.
- You are concerned that your child is at risk of dehydration or is dehydrated.

These are only some examples of when to seek emergency care. Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) has more information to **help decide if your child needs emergency care**.

For more information specific to COVID-19 and children, including rare complications, see **My Child Has COVID. What Should I Know?** in the **Confused About COVID** series.



Helping your child at home

- **Fever:** Treat fever or pain with over-the-counter medicines such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen if your child can take it — and if it is available.



Call your family doctor or pharmacist for advice if you are having difficulty accessing over-the-counter medicines. Information from the Canadian Pediatric Society outlines **how to take a child's temperature** and what to do if they have a fever. Here is a video on **managing fever in a child** from the U.K.'s National Health Service.

- **Red eyes and discharge:** These symptoms almost always go away on their own, without antibiotic drops or other medication. Warm compresses and artificial tears can help reduce discomfort.
- **Stuffy and runny nose:** Try saline rinsing sprays, a humidifier or a nasal aspirator.
- **Earache:** If you notice your child tugging on their ear, they may have an earache. Get assessed if your child's earache lasts more than 48-72 hours, if there is discharge from the ear or they have had more than 2-3 ear infections in the last year.
- **Cough:** Treat a cough with a humidifier or the steam from a shower. If the cough sounds like a bark, cool outside air may help. If your child is at least one year old, you can give them 1-2 teaspoons of honey in the evening.
- **Fluids:** Make sure your child gets enough fluids, including water, soups, sports drinks or even popsicles. Breastmilk/formula is enough for young babies who do not drink other fluids.

Tips to stay healthy and prevent illness

- Wear a mask (and have your child wear a mask) when in crowded, public indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often and well; use hand sanitizer when washing is not possible.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow instead of your hands.
- Stay home and keep your child home when they are sick, especially in the first couple of days when most infectious.
- Get the flu shot and keep COVID-19 doses up to date.



Ontario College of
Family Physicians



The OCFP thanks Dr. Kate Miller and Norfolk Family Medical for the **blog post** which inspired this information.

Information for families and caregivers on children's fever and pain medication

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS A FEVER

Community and hospital pharmacies all over Canada are working with manufacturers, distributors, federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and others to address the current supply challenges affecting pediatric formulations of fever and pain medication.

This tip sheet was developed in collaboration with health-care providers to offer guidance on when and how to use these products, and when you should speak with a health-care professional for advice.

WHAT IS A FEVER?

- A fever is a rise in body temperature above normal range.
- It is usually a sign that the body is fighting an infection.
- A fever itself is generally harmless and possibly even helpful.
- Fevers don't always need to be treated.
- To learn more, please see "[Fever and temperature-taking](#)" from the Canadian Paediatric Society.



Your trusted health-care provider can help decide if taking medicine is recommended.

Method	Normal temperature range
Rectum	36.6°C to 37.9°C (97.9°F to 100.2°F)
Mouth	35.5°C to 37.5°C (95.9°F to 99.5°F)
Armpit	36.5°C to 37.5°C (97.8°F to 99.5°F)
Ear	35.8°C to 37.9°C (96.4°F to 100.2°F)

HOW CAN I HELP A CHILD WITH A FEVER AND/OR PAIN?

When a child is sick, one of the main goals is to relieve discomfort and promote rest. Treating a fever does not impact the length of time you are sick



You may use **acetaminophen** or **ibuprofen** when an infant or child is in pain or is uncomfortable because of a fever.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE DRUGS?

Acetaminophen and **ibuprofen** both help to manage fever and pain, but they work in the body differently.

Ibuprofen will also help to reduce swelling, bruising, redness and pain/tenderness related to these symptoms following an injury.



Canadian Pharmacists Association
Association des pharmaciens du Canada



Information for families and caregivers on children's fever and pain medication

HOW TO USE THESE MEDICINES WISELY

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I NEED TO USE ACETAMINOPHEN OR IBUPROFEN?



Your pharmacist can help you choose the right formulation for an infant or child's needs based on what products are available.



It is best to use a pediatric measuring cup, spoon or syringe to give liquid medications to children.



These drugs come in a variety of dosage forms, such as liquids, chewable tablets and rectal suppositories.



- These different formulations will vary in strength.
- Always refer to the package for product-specific dosing instructions or speak with a pharmacist to ensure a safe dose is being given.
- In some cases, tablets that are used for adults can be modified for children with caution depending on the child's age, size, and ability to swallow solid medications (e.g., tablets can be split).

Always talk to a health-care provider to discuss what options are appropriate and safe for your child.

WHAT SHOULD I NOT DO?



Do not give more than the maximum number of doses per day as noted on the medication package.



Do not use aspirin (acetylsalicylic or ASA) to treat a child's fever as it can increase the risk of a serious illness called Reye's Syndrome when used during various viral infections.



WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MAKE SURE ALL CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS HAVE ACCESS TO THESE MEDICINES?

- Do not buy more product than you need (i.e., large quantities); this will help share the available supply so those who require medicine will be able to find it when they need it.
- Speak to a pharmacist about safe and accessible options that are best suited for your individual needs.

This information is provided for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Please speak with a trusted health-care provider if you have questions or concerns about the health needs of any infant or child.