

Helpful Tools to Prevent a Cold for Your Child



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The winter can be a great time of year for children and families. Between the holidays, snowball fights, sledding, making snowmen and winter break, it's hard to slow down and realize that this is the season when most people, especially children, are exposed to cold and flu germs. Getting sick can't always be avoided, but here are a few things you can do to help lessen the spread of germs to make your winter season more enjoyable.

- 1.** WASH YOUR HANDS! A LOT! This is the best thing you can do to avoid a cold. Make sure you wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. Remind children to wash their hands especially after blowing their nose, coughing into their hands or touching others who have a cold.
- 2.** Cover your mouth while sneezing or coughing.
- 3.** Make sure your home is cleaned frequently.
- 4.** Wash your clothes and your children's school and gym clothes after every use.
- 5.** Frequently change your pillow cases and sheets.
- 6.** Change hand towels on a daily basis.
- 7.** Let fresh air into the house for a short amount of time each day, if possible.
- 8.** Get plenty of sleep.
- 9.** Eat nutritious food and get exercise.
- 10.** Advise children not to share food or drinks.
- 11.** Remind children not to touch their face often, especially after sneezing, coughing or touching public spaces (bus seats, door handles, public bathrooms).
- 12.** Drink lots of fluids!



13. If your child goes to daycare, keep them at home when they are ill, and make sure the daycare center's policy is for all parents to do the same. Otherwise, your entire family will be constantly exposed to colds and other infections.

14. Replace your child's toothbrush monthly or bi-monthly or after your child gets sick. Keep family toothbrushes separate, particularly when someone in the family gets sick.

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Here is a breakdown for infants and toddlers and how to prevent them from getting a cold.

A Newborn's Risk for Colds

A newborn's immune system is very sensitive and immature; therefore, they are a greater risk than most for getting colds and infections the first few weeks of life. Newborns have some defense from the antibodies they receive from the placenta before birth and through their mother's breast milk, if breastfed. But there are many germs that they are not protected against.

It's important to help newborns build a strong immune system before they can be exposed to the cold virus. A cold that inflicts an adult or older child will likely cause a more serious illness for a newborn. Here are some ways to reduce the risk of colds for your newborn:

- 1.** To help boost immunity, try to breastfeed your newborn baby.
- 2.** Sterilize bottles and nipples between uses by boiling them or running them through the dishwasher.
- 3.** After each feeding, discard uneaten formula or breast milk (if bottled). The reason for this is that the baby's saliva has germs which multiply quickly.
- 4.** Keep baby's formula or breast milk in the refrigerator until just before feeding time. Then warm the milk and feed it to the baby immediately, before bacteria have a chance to grow.
- 5.** Wash your hands frequently before and after feeding your baby and before and after changing your baby's diaper.
- 6.** Keep newborns away from anyone who is ill.
- 7.** If possible, avoid crowds and using public transportation with newborns.

A Young Child's Risk for Colds

Due to young children going to daycare, preschool, school and different friends' and relatives' houses, they are most likely to get colds during the year, but they also are strengthening and maturing their immune system during this time. If your toddler or preschooler has a runny nose all the time, it's not that abnormal. Most preschoolers get five to seven or even more colds each year.

The most successful way of spreading a cold is transferring mucus secretions to the fingers and hands and then to the mouth or nose of another person. While mouthing toys or other objects is a young child's way of exploring the world, parents must watch out for any items that might harbor bacteria. It is also impossible to monitor a child who is sharing toys or food or just playing in general with other children, whether they are at home or in school. Here are some tips to reduce your young child's risk of colds:

- 1.** Wash toys with soap and water and then allow them to air-dry. Many plastic toys are also dishwasher-safe and can be washed that way.
- 2.** Wash pacifiers with soap and water frequently.
- 3.** Wipe young children's hands with a clean washcloth and warm water often. Babies love to put their hands in their mouths.
- 4.** Wash young children's hands before and after eating and after playtime.
- 5.** Tell your child never to share food or drinks with other children.
- 6.** Keep your child home from school or daycare when they are sick.

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