

Coughs & Breathing



NASAL SUCTIONING
to help clear mucus



HUMIDIFIER
for easier breathing



FREQUENT FLUIDS
to prevent dehydration

How can I treat a cough at home?

Coughs are common with many childhood illnesses. There are things you can do at home to help ease your child's cough. Children benefit most from care that supports their breathing, eating, and sleep while their immune system fights off the virus causing the cough. These supports include:

- **Nasal saline with suctioning or nasal irrigation:** If your child is under the age of 3, use a saline solution to loosen mucus and then suck it out using a nasal aspirator. If your child is 3 years and older, use nasal irrigation to help clear out thick mucus. More information can be found on our [Nasal Suctioning and Nasal Irrigation](#) guide.
- **Cool-mist humidifier:** Allows for easier breathing
- **Warm-mist humidifier:** Can be helpful for loosening mucus in wet coughs
- **Fluids and frequent feedings:** Make sure your child is staying hydrated
- **Acetaminophen or ibuprofen (if older than 6 months):** Can help reduce fever. Your child's immune system uses fever to kill the virus, so we encourage you to treat only if fever makes your child uncomfortable
- **Honey:** Can be effective in easing a cough. Honey should only be given to children over 1 year of age
- *Cough and cold medications are not safe or effective in children under 6 years of age*

Coughs can sound dry (no mucus) or wet (with mucus). Coughing up mucus is normal and can be yellow, green, or gray in color. Coughing is one way the body can clear mucus from the lungs. Coughs can last for 2-3 weeks or longer.

How do I know if my child is having difficulty breathing?

The common cold and other viruses often affect the respiratory system. There are certain signs to look out for when your child is sick to make sure they are not working too hard to breathe. If your child appears to be breathing too fast, lift up their shirt and look for the signs below that indicate increased work of breathing (WOB). Seek medical attention immediately if any of these signs are present:



FAST BREATHING

The rate of breathing seems faster than normal



BELLY MUSCLES PUSHING

Belly is pushing or child is grunting



RETRACTIONS

Pulling in of muscles between ribs or in the neck



NOSTRILS FLARING

Nose opening wide to get more oxygen



WHEEZING OR STRIDOR

Wheezing: Whistling noise when breathing out
Stridor: Harsh sound when breathing in



HEAD BOBBING

Head moving up and down with breathing