

or cups.

Reduce Body Temperature

If the child has a significantly elevated body temperature, controlling the fever is important for comfort. Parents should know how to take a child's temperature and read a thermometer accurately. Nurses should verify that parents know how to check a temperature and provide education when needed.

If the practitioner prescribes an antipyretic such as ibuprofen (for infants and children 6 months old and older) or acetaminophen, parents may need instruction on how to administer it. Most parents can read the label and calculate the desired dosage, but parents of infants and toddlers require detailed instruction and dosing parameters. It is important to emphasize accuracy in both the amount of drug given and the time intervals for drug administration to avoid cumulative effects.

Children with respiratory illnesses will perform activities as appropriate to their energy level. One of the cardinal signs that the child is feeling better is the increase in activity; this may, however, be temporary if a high fever returns after a few hours of increased activity. Cool liquids are encouraged to reduce the temperature and minimize the chances of dehydration (see [Controlling Elevated Temperatures, Chapter 20](#)).

Nursing Alert

Parents are cautioned regarding over-the-counter combination “cold” remedies because these often include acetaminophen. Careful calculation of both the acetaminophen given separately and the acetaminophen in combination medications is necessary to avoid an overdose.

Promote Hydration

Dehydration is a potential complication when children have respiratory tract infections and are febrile or anorexic, especially when vomiting or diarrhea is present. Infants are especially prone to fluid and electrolyte deficits when they have a respiratory illness because a rapid respiratory rate that accompanies such illnesses precludes adequate oral fluid intake. In addition, the presence of