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Childhood Respiratory Infections

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Respiratory infections in children are a common occurrence, especially when the weather changes or certain other factors. Children are susceptible to both upper and lower respiratory infections.

Air that is travelling from the throat, down the neck into the windpipe is subject to various diseases and

conditions as it enters the chest area, and carries air to the right and left lung, respectively. Starting at the top, the nose and throat, there is the common cold. Medically referred to as a upper respiratory infection (URI), it causes inflammation and swelling of the lining of the nose, throat, and sinuses. Lower respiratory tract infection (LRTI) is infection below the level of the larynx and presents conditions and symptoms depending on age, infecting organism and the site of infection.

Upper respiratory tract infections

Common upper respiratory infections in children include,

Common colds

Tonsillitis

Sinusitis

Laryngitis

Flu

A cough is the most common symptom of an upper respiratory infection, other symptoms include headaches, a stuffy or runny nose, a sore throat, sneezing and muscle aches.

Lower respiratory tract infections

Common diseases and conditions associated with lower respiratory condition include,

Flu
Bronchitis
Pneumonia
Bronchiolitis
Tuberculosis

Colds are caused by many types of viruses causing virtually the same symptoms in a child and often go away on their own. For pediatric respiratory infection, antibiotics may be prescribed. Older children can opt for a zinc lozenges, which can help reduce the severity and duration of symptoms.

Most children by the age of 2 would have been infected with respiratory syncytial virus. Children who attend day care or have siblings who attend school are at a higher risk of exposure.

How to manage the symptoms at home

Most pediatric respiratory infections don't require treatment and will get better on its own. However, certain children may need mild over the counter medication such a cough pediatric cough syrup or Panado, and drinking plenty of fluids and getting enough rest. In our Sinhalese culture drinking *koththa malli* is the only resort, that many of our ancestors and parents turn to on a regular basis. It is a traditional remedy for all coughs, aches and pains, and is used by many new-age parents as well. Usually the symptoms pass within one to two weeks. There are times that infants can get severely affected by respiratory infections, and in these cases, instead of opting for any home remedies, the infant should be rushed to the pediatrician.

For an older child if the symptoms get worse over the course of a few days, and the child has a fever, difficulty breathing, is wheezing, is turning blue, is not feeding well, seems confused, or if you have any concerns, take your child to see a pediatrician as soon as possible.





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