

## Giving Colds the Cold Shoulder

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Parents expect that their children will get sick during the winter months, and they do their best to protect their families from a blizzard of winter illnesses. Often they ask their pediatricians how to help their kids. Here are some helpful tips!

To help stop the spread of respiratory illnesses like the cold and flu, try these three ideas:

1. *Teach your child to cover his mouth with **his elbow** when he coughs or sneezes to prevent literally tens of thousands of germs from being airborne your direction.*
2. *Teach your child to use tissues for his runny nose (not his sleeve or his mitten or his bare hand) and then to throw the tissues away.*
3. *When he comes in from “the world”-- and certainly before eating—your child should wash his hands to protect him from accidentally eating the germs that have been sneezed, coughed or handed to him!*

But suppose your child gets a cold or the flu?

Now that the FDA has banned many over the counter cold and cough preparations for young children, parents are unsure what to do. The good news is that --although the banned medicines were ineffective and often had bad side effects--, some time-honored pediatric tricks still work.

The following tips help sick children feel better without unwanted side effects:

1. For stuffy children of all ages, it is important to offer *extra liquids and rest*. Sick children aren't hungry and don't need to eat; but *all* children must keep up with their drinking—drinking extra liquids if possible. Chicken soup, juices and popsicles are perfect.
2. Children with colds love being given *soft tissues* for their noses. A private tissue box is a special treat!
3. Before a child's nose gets raw and chapped from all that blowing, try rubbing a little *petroleum jelly at the bottom of the nose*. This will keep your child comfortable --and prevent impetigo. *Lip balm* is great, too.
4. Sick children love to be kept company, played with and read to.

What about going to school when she is sick? Another golden rule applies here: *please do not let your child go to school (or visiting or shopping) while she is sick*. With even a cold, your child is harboring germs that may be medically significant for others: her friend at school may have asthma worsened by colds; the grandmother in the checkout line may have heart disease. Keep your sick child at home for a couple of days until she is less contagious and feeling better!

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Dr. Charlotte Cowan is a board certified pediatrician and author of 5 medical children's stories that entertain, educate, and reassure both parent and child. Covering fever, colds, earaches, and sore throats, each book includes a *Parent Guide*. For information about her latest title, *The Moose with Loose Poops*, visit: <http://www.drhippo.com/>

