

Common Illnesses and Suggested Remedies

Based on current information, the medications listed in this section are acceptable and may be purchased without a prescription. *However, it is always best to do without any medications, if at all possible, especially during the first 12 weeks when your baby's organs are developing.*

Remember, colds and most other minor complaints will run their course and eventually go away regardless of whether you treat them. However, if a cough or cold is preventing you from eating or sleeping, by all means try the medications listed below. Malnutrition and sleep deprivation don't benefit your baby.

With recent changes in formulations of over-the-counter cold and allergy products, it's more important than ever to be a smart consumer. Read labels, and always select remedies based on the generic names of the ingredients listed, rather than on brand name. (For example, Sudafed products available on the shelf now contain *phenylephrine*, which has been shown to reduce blood flow to the placenta; this medication should be avoided.) Choose single symptom remedies rather than multi-symptom products. Don't take medicine you don't need.

Cold symptoms

(runny nose, scratchy throat, congestion, cough)

Colds seem to be more common and more prolonged during pregnancy.

- Increase humidity in the air with a cool mist vaporizer or humidifier. (A vaporizer is invaluable for treating baby's stuffy nose so you might as well buy one now).
- Drink lots of extra fluids: juices, broth, decaffeinated beverages, ice pops, etc.
- Chicken soup has been scientifically shown to decrease congestion.
- Rest as much as you can.
- Relieve nasal stuffiness with saline drops or Ocean spray: a weak salt solution you can buy at the pharmacy, or make by adding 1/4 teaspoon of salt to 1 cup of boiled water. You can apply this with a nose dropper or inhale it directly to help loosen nasal secretions. Use as needed.

If these measures aren't helping and you are very uncomfortable, try:

- diphenhydramine (Benadryl) 25 mg to relieve stuffiness, and rest.
- guaifenesin (Robitussin) can help to make secretions more watery and thus easier to clear from sinuses or cough up.
- **after 12 weeks**, you can try pseudoephedrine hydrochloride for stuffiness or facial pressure. You can get this at the pharmacy counter without a prescription. Do not take any of the Sudafed brand products that contain phenylephrine.
- oxymetazoline hydrochloride (Afrin) nasal spray for a stuffy nose. **However, use this sparingly: it's very habit-forming.**

Allergic symptoms

(sneezing, itchy eyes or throat; profuse, clear, runny nose)

- Avoid cause if possible.

- If symptoms are severe, try antihistamines such as:
chlorpheniramine maleate (Chlor-trimeton)
diphenhydramine (Benadryl)
loratidine (Claritin)

Again, you can take pseudoephedrine hydrochloride for stuffiness or facial pressure **after 12 weeks**, but be sure to avoid products containing phenylephrine. Claritin-D (which contains pseudoephedrine hydrochloride, without phenylephrine) is available from the pharmacist. Call the office if these measures aren't effective.

Cough

- Stop smoking.
- Use a cool mist vaporizer or take a steamy shower.
- Drink large quantities of fluids.
- Chicken soup has been proven to help.
- One teaspoon of honey mixed with lemon juice diluted with a small amount of water often helps.
- Suck on hard candy or cough drops to relieve a dry throat cough.
- To loosen a cough, try guaifenesin syrup (Robitussin). You can take twice the recommended dosage of plain guaifenesin.
- To suppress a cough, especially at night, try guaifenesin with dextromethorphan (Robitussin-DM). Stick to the recommended dosage.
- To dry up post nasal drip, try diphenhydramine (Benadryl).
- **After 12 weeks**, you can use pseudoephedrine hydrochloride for post-nasal drip. You can get this at the pharmacy counter without a prescription. Be sure to avoid products which contain phenylephrine.

These medications will not completely eliminate the cough, but they should help make you more comfortable. **Call us if you can't sleep because of coughing, if you are coughing up green or yellow sputum, or if you have fever of greater than 101°F.**

Fever

- Drink lots of fluids.
- You want to lower your temperature gradually, so take a lukewarm, not cold, shower or bath.
- Dress in loose, comfortable clothing and cover lightly if necessary.
- Keep room well-ventilated, but avoid drafts.
- Rest.
- Take two 325 mg acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 4 hours.
No aspirin or ibuprofen (Motrin /Advil).
- If a fever of 101° or greater doesn't respond to these measures or continues for more than 10-12 hours, call us.

Sore throat

- Frequent salt water gargles (1/2 tsp. salt in cup of warm water).
- Cool mist vaporizer.
- Drink lots of fluids.
- Stop smoking.

- If you have cold symptoms, especially a post nasal drip, try the suggestions above under “Cold Symptoms.”
- Make an appointment to have a culture taken if it is not better in 2 days, is getting worse, if you have a fever of 101° or greater, or see pus in the back of your throat.
- Throat lozenges (any brand) can relieve much of the discomfort.

Prescription medications

If you see your another health care provider, always let them know you're pregnant. While penicillin, amoxicillin, and erythromycin are known to be safe, many commonly prescribed drugs are unsafe or unproven in pregnancy.

Here is a partial list of drugs that should not be used by pregnant women:

tetracycline
doxycycline
Biaxin
Accutane
Depakote
Coumadin
ACE inhibitors

If you are unsure about any medication, call us first.

Aches and pains

Headache or backache are covered in Chapter 5, “Alleviating Common Discomforts of Pregnancy.” For other aches and pains:

- Have someone massage where it hurts.
- Relax in the shower or bath.
- Apply heat such as heating pad or a hot water bottle, to tense sore muscles. Use an ice pack for 15 minutes per hour for muscles spasms.
- Rest. Use pillows for support.
- Use acetaminophen in moderation (once or twice as needed, but not constantly for several days).
- Stronger pain relievers can be prescribed if needed; pain of that severity should warrant a call to us.
- Tell us about frequent or persistent aches and pains.

Vomiting and diarrhea

- Rest.
- Don't eat or drink anything for a couple of hours to give your stomach a rest.
- Start out with sips of water or ice chips.
- Gradually begin drinking small amounts of clear liquids: broth, defizzed cola or ginger ale, weak tea, JELL-O, popsicles, Gatorade.
- Gradually take larger amounts of fluids, then add ripe bananas, rice, apple sauce, and toast (BRAT diet). When symptoms stop, continue clear liquids and BRAT diet for 24 hours.
- Slowly get back to your regular diet. Avoid milk and fatty foods for 48 more hours.
- Immodium AD or Kaopectate will help slow the diarrhea. Follow the instructions on the label. **Pepto-Bismol should be avoided as it contains aspirin products.**
- If vomiting or diarrhea persists over 24 hours, call us.

See the Chapter 5 for other problems such as heartburn, constipation, hemorrhoids, backache, varicose veins, etc.