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Flu (Influenza)

Brief Version

The flu (influenza) is a "bad cold" caused by a virus. The virus infects the nose, throat, and air passages to the lungs. Your child will probably have a stuffy nose, sore throat, and cough. Your child may have more muscle pain, headache, fever, and chills than colds usually cause. Flu is not dangerous for people who are usually healthy.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Fever or aches.**

Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 6 hours or ibuprofen (Advil) every 8 hours for fever over 102°F (39°C).

Do not give your child aspirin.

- **Cough or hoarseness.**

Give cough drops to your child if he is older than 4 years old. If your child is 1 to 4 years old, you can give him corn syrup (1/2 to 1 teaspoon as needed).

- **Sore throat.**

Give hard candy to children over 4 years old. Warm chicken broth may also help children over 1 year old.

- **Stuffy nose.**

Put warm-water or saline nosedrops into your child's nose. Then have the child blow his nose or you can use a suction bulb. This will open most blocked noses.

Call your child's doctor right away if:

- Your child has difficulty breathing.
- Your child starts to act very sick.

Call your child's doctor during office hours if:

- Your child has any related problems such as an earache, sinus pain or pressure, or a fever lasting over 3 days.
- You have other questions or concerns.

Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.