

Respiratory Illnesses

Call

Call the doctor if:

- Your child's cough sounds like a bark (seal-like).
- Your child coughs up blood.
- Your child's cough is followed by a high-pitched "whoop."
- Your child's lips turn blue when she coughs.
- Your child cannot sleep due to coughing.
- Your child's cough lasts longer than 2 weeks.

Call the doctor if your child has cold symptoms AND:

COLDS: Some symptoms of a cold are a runny nose, watery eyes, sneezing, nasal congestion ("stuffy nose"), and dry cough. If your child has cold symptoms AND has any of the following symptoms, call your child's doctor:

- Has any change in her breathing or difficulty breathing.
- Has had a fever for more than 3 days or a fever higher than 102.2° F. (See Fever section)
- Has not had all of her recommended immunizations.
- Is complaining of ear pain that doesn't go away (lasting longer than 12 hours).
- Has a history of asthma or other lung problems.
- Has trouble swallowing or drinking.
- Has had symptoms for more than 2 weeks.

Remember, most practices have a doctor on call during times when the office isn't open. Call the office's main number for information.

Treating a cough:

COUGH: Cough is a common symptom of an illness that is typically caused by a virus. Cigarette smoke and allergies may also cause cough. Although coughs often sound bad, coughing is a good reflex that clears out the airways and protects your child from getting sicker.

- **Do not use over-the-counter cough and cold syrups in children younger than 6 years old (unless a doctor advises this). They do not work well in this age group.**
- **Cool mist humidifier:** helps keep room air moist (dry air can make your child cough more).
- Give your child lots of liquids to drink.
- Avoid cigarette smoke.

The Facts:

The common cold is due to viruses that are spread from one person to another by hand contact, coughing, and sneezing. There are up to 200 different viruses that can cause colds. Cold air and drafts cannot cause a child to get a cold.

- The average child under six years old gets 6-8 colds per year. These colds last longer than when an adult gets the same illness.
- Children who go to school or daycare are especially likely to have many colds each year.
- Most colds aren't serious and don't need to be treated by a doctor.
- When your child has a cold, make sure that she rests and drinks lots of liquids (like juice and water).
- Encourage your child to wash her hands frequently so that she doesn't give her cold to other people in the house.

Breathing Difficulty:

Because colds and other respiratory problems are so common, sometimes parents feel comfortable taking care of the problem on their own and not calling the doctor. Breathing problems are much more serious than a cold (although the two may occur together) and should be treated by a doctor.

- Parents who have a child with asthma may feel comfortable treating their other children with the same medicines; however, you should never give one child's medicine to another child, even if you think it will help.
- Not all breathing problems are asthma. Children with breathing problems can get very sick very quickly. Never try to treat them on your own at home.
- **ALWAYS** call your doctor for information or an appointment.

Call the doctor if your child:

- Is having difficulty breathing and severe wheezing.
- Is not getting better after two doses of asthma medicine.

Call within 24 hours if:

- Wheezing lasts for 5 days.
- Your child is using asthma medicine every 4 hours for more than one day (more than six times).
- You have any concerns or questions.



Signs of Breathing Difficulty

1. SOUNDS of breathing trouble:

ALL of the items listed below are cause for concern and you should call your foster child's doctor immediately if you notice any of these symptoms.

- Wheezing: a musical sound that may occur with breathing in or out.
- Stridor: a harsh, high-pitched noise with breathing in.
- Grunting: a short, low, guttural sound with breathing out.
- You do not need to identify the exact sound your child is making. Know that these noises are not normal.

2. MOVEMENTS of breathing trouble:

- Your child will use extra muscles to move air if he or she is having trouble breathing.
- The stomach sucks in when your child breathes in (your child's chest and stomach look like a seesaw, alternating going in and out).
- The area above the collar-bones (the front of the neck) sucks in when your child breathes in.
- The spaces between the ribs suck in when the child breathes in (the ribs are easier to see).

3. OTHER SIGNS of breathing trouble:

- Nostrils flare when your child breathes in.
- Lips or tongue appear blue.
- Drooling.
- Voice or cry that is muffled.
- Leaning forward with hands on knees to help breathing.
- Not being able to speak in full-sentences (because he can't catch his breath).

Your child may have many of these signs if he is having difficulty breathing. Or he may have just one sign. Either way, it is important to recognize that your child's breathing has changed and you should call a doctor.

Asthma:

This is a common disease in children that causes the airways to become narrow and swollen, making it hard for air to get to the lungs. The symptoms of an asthma "attack" are different for each child. You may see:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Breathing quickly
- Using extra muscles to breathe

Asthma attacks may be frightening, but they are treatable. When medicines are taken as directed, the symptoms can be controlled or completely clear up. You must speak to your child's doctor to become familiar with their asthma treatment plan.

Here are some questions you should ask:

- How can I prevent or reduce asthma attacks?
- How can I quickly recognize that my child is having an asthma attack?
- What medications do I need to have ready? When do I give the medications? How do I give the medications properly?
- What should I do in an emergency?

What can I do to help my child?

- Try to find out what causes your child to have asthma attacks and avoid those things. These "triggers" may include:
 - Smoke
 - Pet fur
 - Dust
 - Pollen
- When children with asthma get colds they can start to wheeze. Keep their asthma medicine handy.
- Some people with asthma have short attacks with strenuous exercise. Make sure teachers know about your child's needs and have appropriate medication ready.