



Parent/Kids FAQ on Sinusitis, Allergies and Colds

It seems like my child is always getting a cold, is this normal?

It's not uncommon for children to have 5 or 6 colds every year. Typically these are due to viruses and seem to be more common for children in daycare. If they last more than a week or never seem to go away, you should talk to your doctor about it.

If I have environmental allergies, will my child develop them as well?

Not necessarily. However, if both parents have allergies, the children have a 50% chance of developing them as well.

How do I know if my child has a cold or an allergy?

Sometimes it can be hard to tell. It would be very unusual for allergies to cause fevers or pain, but the symptoms of sneezing, cough, nasal congestion and runny nose can be common to both. Frequent sneezing, itchy water eyes, and triggering of these symptoms by going outdoors may indicate an outdoor allergy.

What are the common environmental allergens?

Many substances can cause allergies; depending on when they are present, this may result in either seasonal or perennial (year long) symptoms. Usually these allergens need to be airborne to cause nose or lung symptoms. Typical allergens are tree pollens, grass pollens, ragweed, mold, dust mites, animal danders and dust. Certain foods and chemicals can also cause allergic reactions.

How do I know if my child has sinusitis?

Sinusitis is an inflammation of the sinuses that can result from a cold or severe allergies. If your child's symptoms last longer than a week and are associated with pain, fever, or drainage you should contact your doctor. Not all sinusitis is bacterial, so your doctor may not necessarily prescribe an antibiotic.

They have taken most of the over-the-counter cold medications for children off the shelf, is there anything we can do at home instead?

Saline sprays and rinses can be a very effective way of treating a cold, allergy, or sinus infection. Depending on the age of your child, you may be able to do this with saline droppers or sprays meant for infants and toddlers, or saline rinse bottles and formulas that can be used with older children. If your child has pain or a fever, you can still use some of the over-the-counter pain medications according to the manufacturer's recommendations. If the fever persists or the pain does not improve, you should contact your doctor.

My pediatrician thinks my child might need surgery, what should I do?

Sometimes when medications and other therapies fail to treat sinusitis, surgery may be necessary to clean the sinuses and allow them to drain better. Only an Otolaryngologist-Head & Neck Surgeon can determine if your child would benefit from surgery and may offer several different options such as adenoidectomy, sinus rinsing, or limited sinus surgery.