

Common Cold vs. Influenza in Children

FamilyTalk

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With Dr. Charneca Knowles-Demeritte

Physician's Bio

Dr. Charneca Knowles-Demeritte obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Georgia State University, then pursued medical studies at the University of The West Indies. After successful completion of medical school in 2011, she interned at Princess Margaret Hospital, then undertook pediatric specialization at the University of the West Indies, which she successfully completed in July 2018. She currently works at Princess Margaret Hospital in the Pediatric Department, and also at Precious Posterity Paediatric Centre

FamilyTalks is an innovative, monthly forum hosted by Sandbox Bahamas, the children's clothing store in the Harbour Bay Shopping Center. The discussions with leading pediatricians offers parents and families opportunities to explore child health and wellness in a relaxed community

Relevance of topic

Corona virus is new.

There are several strains.

What's a virus?

We call it an invisible enemy, invisible to naked eye. A virus is also a parasite. Once they enter human body, viruses replicate. They shed, then spread.

Type of virus determines type of symptoms

Some are airborne, others are passed by contact

Incubation periods differ

1-2 days

5-7 days

Corona virus - they think incubation period is 14 days, now they recommend quarantines up to 24 days

Common cold is called *rhinovirus*

Influenza A & B

Influenza C - rare

SARS - also a virus

Common cold

Runny nose, clear

Stuffiness

Uncomfortable
Low grade fever
Otherwise running around, normal

Once children start daycare, colds won't go away

Influenza

High fever
Chills
Some have joint pain
Eyes red, eye pain
Kids feel really bad
No appetite
No activity
Can progress where they can develop pneumonia
There is a vaccine for influenza, none for common cold

Vaccines

Audience fine with regular vaccine, not with flu vaccine. Parental reservations - baby too young; some say they got vaccine and still got sick.

Age criteria - 6 months and older
Has been proven safe, tested and tried same as other vaccines

Side effects

Soreness
Redness at injection site

Misconceptions

You don't get flu from the vaccine.
There are many other viruses that mimic the flu.

When you get the vaccine, takes time for body to build up antibodies. May have had exposure but didn't have enough antibody development to resist flu.

To be honest, CDC has said that sometimes flu vaccine is only 40-60% effective.

Doctor thinks it's better to have the flu and have some coverage. Without vaccine, symptoms are more severe.

Doc has tested children who are positive for Influenza A & B. As long as they are healthy, they'll do well. Lots of rest, lots of care, lots of fluids, fever medication, once they're healthy. It's babies six to twelve months, and kids with asthma or diabetes or underlying medical condition, kids with sickle cell---they are at higher risk.

Pediatricians don't force the vaccine but recommend it.

Corona virus

Lots of paranoia, lots of unknowns

There is so much we don't know. Most important thing, not to panic. Recognize that this is another virus.

I read a document from CDC from infectious disease specialist (Dr. Anthony Fauci, on CNN the other night--good recommendations) He indicated that as long as you are healthy, and you have no underlying medical conditions, he isn't too worried.

Good news - no confirmed cases in pediatric population of children under 15

Prevention is most important. Regular hygiene. Wash hands as soon as you get home for at least 20 seconds. (We teach children to count while singing the "Happy Birthday" song, about 20 seconds.) Stay away from people coughing and sneezing, some of these things are airborne.

The World Health Organization recommends standing at least three feet away from someone who is coughing or sneezing. Use hand sanitizers of at least 60% alcohol based strength in order to be effective. Take hand sanitizers with you for use in public places--shopping carts, door handles, tables.

Travel has been banned to places like China, Italy. If you go, prepare for quarantine coming back. At this time we don't advise travel to those places.

In food store, on airplane, always wipe the cart down. Or use shopping cart covers, which can be purchased locally. Can also be used in high chairs at restaurants. Ask waitstaff to wipe down tables and chairs.

Avoid rubbing eyes and touching nose out in public.

Only recommending wearing mask in countries with Corona, or around others who are ill.

Some reading says mask use may be more harmful because they make you touch your face even more, removal to eat, adjusting it, etc. Most people don't have the knowledge to properly don and remove masks. Masks are supposed to be disposable.

They are saying health care professionals are the ones who need the masks, and are trained to use them. Buying up all the masks may cause a shortage for health care professionals.

China stopped export of masks because there was too much demand.

Masks may give you a false sense of security.

It's the N95 surgical mask that should be used for airborne diseases. The typical surgical masks pictured on television aren't the correct type.

Treatments for cold and influenza

Cold

Supportive care

Lots of fluids

Calpol for fever

Saline drops to nose

We do not recommend over-the-counter cough and cold medication for children 6 years and under, even in presence of a persistent cough. APA doesn't recommend it for children under 12 years of age.

If the child is examined by doctor, that's an exception. Doctors will recommend a safe medication.

Cough is God's natural way to expel the cold. As long as he is active, not wheezing or consistently sneezing, it will go away naturally.

Over the counter medication - be careful. If you want to give medication, it's best to just treat one symptom at a time. Treat a runny nose with the saline drops. If the child is wheezing, use a nebulizer, possibly with Ventalyn. Doctors look at many things. A child may be prone to bronchialitis, a little bit of runny nose up to 16 months (fact check/listen to recording), and we prescribe saline in a nebulizer.

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Antibiotics do not help with viruses.

Sometimes if children have a runny nose for 2-3 weeks, maybe fever, we treat for sinusitis, which is when antibiotics might be prescribed.

Transition to school - there's no way to prevent child from getting sick. Some of these viruses are most contagious when the child is asymptomatic. They come in contact with the virus, the virus starts to replicate but the child only has a low fever--you can't tell they have it, and they're highly contagious.

Influenza

If child is healthy, normal, they will do well. Sometimes fever can go 6-7 days, decreased appetite and activity, joint pain.

There is a medication, Tamiflu, when a patient tests positive for influenza. Pediatricians look for certain parameters before prescribing.

When do you recommend a child starts school, in terms of their immune system, socialization?

For me, around 18 months, by which time the child will have received most immunizations. Early development in terms of social skills is very important.

Between 18 months and two , placing the child in a language-rich environment is good for them, for early development and speech. Of course you should be reading to them daily at home, interacting.

As long as the child is healthy and well, they should be well in school. Just be prepared for constant runny nose.

Saline drops

Salt water helps the cells that get rid of mucus work better. Salt water also helps with congestion.

How do you feel about transitioning from baby to toddler formula?

By six months babies should start soft foods. Vegetables, one at a time. Move onto fruits, one at a time. That lets you know if they are allergic to any of the foods. We recommend breastmilk up to age two. The brain is growing. If baby weans off by 12 months, don't worry about it. As long as baby is getting three meals and three snacks daily. What's most important are the correct foods, fruit, vegetables, etc. It takes time, patience, trying a little at a time.

One mom commented - baby will take food from someone else, but only milk from me.

Lots of discussion about infant feeding issues

Baby brains are still growing up to age two. That's why nutrition is super important. They need iron, minerals for proper development.

What makes baby really greedy? Does my child have worms?

Only way to know is to test the stool.

Clinically - children with pinworms at night have discomfort, itchy bottoms, and if you look, you can see the worms coming out.

For a parent who wants to know whether kids has a cold or flu?

Nasal congestion and mild fever - cold

High fevers/chills, body aches, along with runny noses - influenza