

# Cuddles and Cures™

Recipes and Remedies that Work like a Charm in Children with Coughs and Colds.

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While over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medicines for children may be convenient, they carry much greater risks to children than parents may realize. The risks are greatest in infants and small children. Recent news reports have informed the public that the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has decided to ban OTC cough and cold medicines in children. Where do parents go for alternatives? There are hundreds of health educators such as nurses, physicians, naturopaths, and other community healers who have been teaching safe, effective alternatives to the OTC medicines for decades. It is my hope that American families will again consider the use of the many effective simple home remedies that have been tested in the sickrooms of American families for centuries.



The following Cuddles and Cures Recipe is the result of more than 20 years of caring for families with sick infants and children.

Here are some important physiological keys about cough and cold symptoms followed by basic principles of care and associated home remedies that can be used in the care of infants and children who are developing normally and who are experiencing typical cold or cough symptoms that are unrelated to major underlying disease:

1. Science has shown that the dripping from the nose at the beginning of a cold is the body's natural way of shedding the cold-causing virus.

**Principle - *Promote the early excretion of the virus through nasal discharge.***



## Cuddles and Cures:

Do not use antihistamines for children and infants with dripping noses because these OTC medicines dry up secretions thereby overriding the body's natural defense system and trapping the virus in the body.

Teach children to gently wipe their nose and throw away the tissue. Teach them to wash their hands frequently. Place a small amount of calendula or chamomile salve on the child's upper lip and nose to prevent skin breakdown from wiping.



2. Cold virus causes inflammation and swelling of tissues. Children have smaller, narrower airways. **Principle** – *decrease inflammation and swelling*.



### **Cuddles and Cures:**

Infants really suffer from colds because the cold virus causes inflammation and makes their little airways swell. This is why infants fuss and cry so much when they get a virus. They are “obligatory” nose breathers. This means that they **naturally** breathe through their nose early in life. When they cannot breathe through their nose because of swelling and secretions they cry. The crying forces them to breathe through their mouth – something that they cannot do naturally. So instead of shushing the baby, say to the baby, “I know that you are having trouble breathing and I am going to help your nose.” Use a bulb syringe to suck out secretions in the nose. Caring for a sick child is an art as well as a science so when you use the syringe take care (be creative) so that you do not do this so much that the procedure ends up creating more inflammation and discomfort. Typically I gently wipe as the baby blows and bubbles out the mucous and I use the syringe when the amount of mucous is more than can be handled by the tissue or it is so thick that the baby cannot blow it out to the entry of the nose. In this case, take a pinch of sea salt and add it to ¼ cup of boiled and cooled water. Using a medicine dropper place 2-3 drops in each of the infant’s nose holes (nares) and gently open and close them one at a time followed by bulb syringing. The salt water helps to liquefy the mucous and loosen it from the nasal passage. Always do this procedure with a clean bulb syringe while the baby is positioned on her side.

Older children may not allow the bulb syringe but they will often agree to salt water nose drops with some coaching.

Another key to dealing with upper respiratory inflammation is to care for the child’s ears. Often child are greatly uncomfortable because the virus causes swelling in the Eustachian tubes (the tubes that drain the ears into the throat). Children often end up with ear infections after they have a cold (see #5 below) so the following remedy is a great preventive as well as anti-inflammatory remedy.

Place 1-2 drops of Mullein Flower Ear oil on a portion of a small cotton pad and place it into the ear so that it cannot fall out. Mullein flower has been used for centuries as an earache cure. You can buy it in a health food store or make it yourself if you have access to the herb. I have harvested mullein flowers in the mountains of Montana with girl scouts and helped them make their own ear oil. We placed 2 handfuls of flowers in olive oil with a minced clove of garlic and some St. Johns Wort flowers. We placed the herbs in a wide-



mouthing jar with cheesecloth over the mouth and secured it with a rubber band. Then we let it stand in a warm place for 2 weeks. We swirled the oil each day and then strained and pressed the oil into small medicine bottles with glass droppers.

Dropping oil on cotton and placing it in the ear at the beginning of cold and cough symptoms is a terrific comfort and preventive! Parents can also place the oil directly into children's ears when the ear gets infected but this is best done under the guidance of a healthcare provider so that the progress of the infection can be monitored. In my practice with nurse practitioners and physicians I have seen significantly fewer cases of children with otitis media (ear infection) needing to take antibiotics when they first used mullein flower ear oil.

3. Cold Viruses enter the body through the naso-pharynx and according to the research of British physician Dr. Edward Bach are promulgated in the large intestine. **Principle** – *Prevent the entry of the virus into the naso-pharynx and keep the bowels moving.*



### **Cuddles and Cures:**

Restrict contact with others who are contagious. Small children put things in their mouths and therefore restricting contact can be very tricky. Controlling contact with mucous secretions is sometimes the best goal. If you see an infant or child with a dripping nose offer to gently wipe it. Then wash your hands.

When a child is exposed to a cold virus the inflammation (heat) in the body increases and this often leads to mild constipation. Prevention is again the best home remedy. *Temporarily* stop feeding the child foods that increase secretions and cause constipation. The most common culprit is dairy food such as milk, cheese, and ice cream. Dairy foods are foods from cow's milk. Cows produce milk for their young to help the baby cow grow. In Chinese medicine, dairy is considered cool, moist and tonifying (helping to build or grow). Mucous is white (cool) and damp. So giving a child dairy when they have a cold will increase the symptoms. Infants must breastfeed or drink their formulas but the small child can be given beverage herbal teas such as mint or fruit tea with a small amount of juice instead of cow's milk. **DO** not use ice as the cold (energetic nature) of ice traps the heat in the digestive tract challenging the immune system. All extreme foods such as ice cold foods and beverages, spicy food, sugary foods and caffeine should be avoided in children especially when they have cold or cough.

Make sure the child drinks enough clear fluids, i.e. herbal teas and diluted fruit juice (3/4 water to 1/4 juice). If s/he gets constipated they are not drinking enough to balance the heat produced by the virus. Consider giving the child a



small glass of warm water with 1 tsp of fresh-squeezed lemon juice to help them move their bowels. If the child's stools are very dry, a small amount of prune juice may help because the juice draws water into the intestines thereby softening the stool.

4. Viruses move around in the body. **Principle** – *Use different remedies that target the place where the virus is “sitting.”*



#### **Cuddles and Cures:**

One of the best remedies for cough and cold in small children is warmth on the skin. When infants and children are sick they often need more cuddles and reassurance from their parents. They need to learn about their bodies; that an occasional illness is part of life and is part of the way humans adapt to their environment. I teach children that the remedies we use when we are sick help us to adapt or change, develop our flexibility, and that health should not be measured by the infrequency of sickness but by the speed in which we recover and adapt to sickness.

Sick infants often want to be held very close to their mom or dad. A hot water bottle is often quite helpful in the smaller child who is too heavy to be carried or held all day for comfort. Hot water bottles can be purchased at local pharmacies and should be in every first aid kit. They fell out of use when American pharmaceutical drugs replaced therapeutics such as the use of water; but they are now regaining favor in many families. When small children are sick with viral inflammation, warmth is soothing. The hot water bottle can be applied to the tummy, the feet, the back or the head. It is wonderful in relieving the mild aches and pains caused by the virus. Be sure that the hot water bottle is filled with water that will create a mild and soothing heat against the child's skin. Place a thin cloth barrier over the bottle such as a pillowcase to diffuse the heat a little. Check the child's skin often especially after first filling the bottle to be sure that the bottle is the appropriate temperature. Never attach the bottle to a child. Lay the bottle against the child so that they can push it away if it is too hot or if it cools off and no longer feels comforting. Teach the child that the warmth helps the body to deal with the cold by promoting relaxation and sleep. The warmth also can create a local increase in body heat making the area inhospitable to the virus. So place the bottle either in a location that you feel the heat (fever) and presence of the virus and subsequent pain or in an area that is cold (such as the feet) that need warmth and comfort.

In addition to moving the hot water bottle around the body it is important to notice where the child is uncomfortable because of the virus's effects. My grandmother always said that a virus starts at the head and goes out the big toe. After caring for hundreds of patients over the years, I have come to agree



with her. Start with remedies for the head such as ear oil and sips of mint tea. If the cold begins to move into the child's chest and they begin to cough consider syrup that has natural ingredients that will strengthen the lung energy. Here are three common home remedies:

- A. Grapes – if the mucous is white or clear (cold) you can give any color grape but if the mucous is yellow or green (hot) give only green grapes (more cooling).
- B. Thyme – Make a thyme tea and pour into the bath. Thyme is anti-microbial and also helps with strengthen the energy of the lungs. Use 4 -6 cups of tea for a large tub or ½ cup for baby tub.
- C. Onion - 1 to 2 large yellow or white onions thinly sliced (Experience the onion's effects on your tear ducts!) 1/2 cup – 1 1/2 (180 to 360 ml) of honey (or any natural sugar). Put in a large container; alternately layer the onion slices and then the honey. Let it stand for three days in a dark corner of the kitchen and then strain the syrup into a colored glass bottle. Store in the refrigerator. The syrup can be taken on a spoon just like any cough syrup or can be added to a tea.

5. Viruses weaken the body making the body susceptible to bacterial infections.

**Principle** – *Attend to the infant and child's needs for care early on in the process.*



### **Cuddles and Cures:**

When children become unusually irritable they may be feeling the inflammatory affects of a virus. Cuddle them if they want it and put the child to bed early. Sleep is an amazing cure for all that ails children. If parents keep a simple record of a child's illnesses and sleep patterns they often see correlations between illness and the need for rest. Tell the child that one way to keep from getting sick is to get a good night sleep at the beginning of symptoms. Sleep is also an important remedy for strengthening immunity and can often keep a cold from settling into a child's lungs (leading to bronchitis and pneumonias). When a child is sick turn the TV off and let the child sleep with soothing music or the sound of your voice reading to them.

Fever can be normal in infants and small children because their inner "thermostat" in the brain is not developed. Fever is a normal response of the immune system and should be supported by recipes and remedies. Drugs that suppress fever are used when the fever is dangerous to the health of the child.

Examples of danger symptoms of fever:

- #1 is Lethargy. If a child has a fever and is running around the house playing with toys then the fever is not dangerous. Always monitor the



child closely for changes in their condition and seek help when the child is not itself and you have a hunch there is a problem.

#2 Child cannot sleep – Control the fever if the discomfort associated with fever is keeping the child from sleeping. Children need the sleep more than they need to fever. Typically small children with colds play during the morning and then tire a bit easily. They take a longer nap and sleep longer at night. If they are able to play during the day then work with the fever and you may notice at some point that the child will sweat at night (i.e. the fever will break). After this they will get better each day. Be sure to change their bed linens in the morning because they have been shedding the virus from their pores and be sure to bathe them. Do not let them chill (shiver or turn blue in the lips) after a tub as this may cause their pores to close again.

6. There are many types of coughs. **Principle** – *Use different remedies for different types of coughs.*



#### **Cuddles and Cures:**

Some coughs are dry and some are moist. The principles above can be applied. If the cough is dry give the child fluids, cooling fruits and lozenges that moisten the upper respiratory tract. If the cough is wet, restrict damp moist foods such as dairy foods and sweets. See a healthcare provider if the cough persists or the child develops high fever and/or lethargy.

Ask your parents and grandparents about the remedies they have used over the years before the invention of OTC (over-the-counter) formulas. You might find a really special family recipe that will work like a charm in your children.

