

Relieving Your Child's Symptoms Naturally

by: June Allan Corrigan

Safe, doctor-approved treatments for the common cold, upset tummies, bug bites and other common afflictions.

Tummy aches, stuffy noses, sore throats, bug bites - what household with children escapes these and other common ailments? Before you reach for expensive medicines, consider treating the problem with an old-fashioned remedy. Doctors say these time-tested treatments are often the best way to help your child feel better fast. What's more, home made cures rarely have side effects, cost next to nothing and use items you probably already have on hand.

Of course, you should always call your pediatrician in the event of a serious health threat. But for minor aches and pains or to help relieve symptoms until you can get in to see the doctor, consider some of these solutions concocted from everyday items located throughout your house.

Kitchen Pantry

Honey and onions for a cough. Honey provides a soothing coating and onion has some mild antibiotic-like properties and is cleansing for the lungs, says Mary Anne Morelli Haskell, D.O., a board certified osteopathic pediatrician in private practice in Coronado. Slice an onion, cover it with two tablespoons of honey and let sit for an hour until the honey becomes watery. Have your child swallow a teaspoon of the liquid. No need to eat the onion. Caution: Honey is not safe for babies under 1 year.

A tea bag for a cold sore. A dampened tea bag applied to the site speeds the drying process and helps form a crust, says pediatrician Lillian Beard, M.D. author of *Salt in Your Sock and Other Tried-and-True Home Remedies*. Earl Grey tea, in particular, contains bergamot, a medicinal herb used to clear up skin infections. Don't have that blend on hand? Any kind of tea bag, as long as it contains caffeine, will act as a drying agent. Tea itself possesses anti-viral properties, a significant factor when you consider that most cold sores are caused by a herpes-type virus.

Baking soda for bug bites. The alkalinity of baking soda has a cooling effect and will neutralize the acid of a bug bite or sting so your child won't feel like scratching it, says Dr. Mary Anne. Mix a teaspoon of baking soda with just enough water to make a thick paste, smear it on the bites, and leave on until dry.

Chicken Broth for Fever. Parents are so quick to pull out acetaminophen tablets but having a fever is like being in the desert and your child needs lots of clear fluids, says Dr. Mary Anne. Strain the broth from a can of heated chicken soup or dissolve the instant variety in hot water, allow to cool and have your child take small sips.

Salt in a sock for an earache. A collection of fluid in the middle ear and the pressure that results is generally what causes an earache, says Dr. Beard. Salt helps draw some of that fluid away and can relieve discomfort. Heat a cup of salt in the microwave and pour it into a sock tying it closed with a hair band. Have your child lie down pressing the affected ear against the sock.

Cayenne pepper for nosebleeds. This spice helps blood clot, says Dr. Beard, and in the case of a nosebleed, it's usually a small capillary that has broken. Keep your child's head upright and pinch his nostrils together for several minutes. Then sprinkle a pinch of cayenne pepper on a moistened Q-tip and dab inside the affected nostril. Your child might feel a little tingle but not the burning sensation one might expect.

Bathroom

Contact-lens solution for congestion. Removing as much mucus as possible using a bulb syringe and preservative-free saline solution relieves the discomfort of a cold, says Dan Brennan, M.D., a pediatrician at Cottage Children's Hospital in Santa Barbara. Gently squeeze the solution into one nostril at a time over the sink or during bath time.

A glass of water for hiccups. Hiccups always occur at the most inopportune times. Your best treatment is just water, says Dr. Byron Wong, M.D., a pediatrician in Calgary, with training in Integrative Medicine. Plug both of your child's ears firmly - this is key. Then have your child drink water while the ears are still plugged. It usually takes a half a cup of water.

Your Purse

A stick of gum for indigestion. When your child fills up on too much birthday cake at a party and complains of a tummy ache, hand him a stick of gum. "This will stimulate production of saliva and digestive juices to neutralize excess stomach acid causing the discomfort," says Dr. Mary Anne.

Ginger lozenges for car sickness. Ginger halts the stomach contractions telling your child's brain he feels nauseous, says Dr. Mary Anne. Ginger flavored tea or beverages such as ginger lemonade given to a child a half hour before getting into the car can circumvent this condition as well. You say our child dislikes the taste of ginger? Try acupressure as an alternative treatment for nausea, says Dr. Wong. Locate a point on the inside of his arm just up from the wrist crease, in the middle between the two tendons. The distance from the crease is the width of three of his fingers (2nd, 3rd and 4th fingers). Massage steadily and firmly on the point, toward the body, until the nausea improves. Your child will notice the point being more tender than the surrounding area.

Garage

Duct tape for warts. This innocuous gray fabric tape seems to irritate warts and inhibit their growth. Place a small piece over your child's wart and change the tape every six days. Persistence is required, says Dr. Mary Anne, but within a couple of months, the wart should be gone.