



# Nasal drainage (Purulent rhinitis)

Patient and Family Education

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## What is purulent rhinitis?

Purulent rhinitis is the medical term for nasal drainage. It is a nose condition caused by allergies, a virus or by bacteria (germ). It may occur by itself or with other illnesses.

## What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- A stuffy nose and sneezing
- Thick, colored mucus that is present for more than five days. This does not always mean that your child has a sinus infection.
- Repeated throat clearing and noisy mouth breathing
- Cough
- Fever
- Stuffy “nasal” voice

## What is the treatment?

Your child’s doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Give cough and cold medicines only as advised by your child’s doctor. This includes both prescription and over-the-counter medicines.
  - For children less than 6 years of age – cough and cold medicines usually do not work well in babies and young toddlers. They also can cause serious side effects. Do not use them if your child is less than 6 unless your child’s doctor tells you to.
  - Do not give a child less than 6 years old any medicine that is made for children over the age of 6.
  - Many brands of cough and cold medicines have the same kinds of ingredients. Many have unnecessary ingredients. Using more than 1 brand or mixing brands can cause a serious overdose and harm in your child. Use these medicines only as directed by your child’s doctor.
- Use humidifiers or vaporizers as ordered by your child’s doctor. (Hot steam vaporizers are not safe. They may burn your child.) Follow the cleaning instructions that came with the machine, so the vaporizer does not grow germs and mold.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or less costly store brand) or ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil® or less costly store brand) may be given for fever or pain. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your doctor how much medicine to give.
  - Do not give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
  - Do not give acetaminophen to babies less than 3 months of age without a doctor's order.
  - Do not give ibuprofen to babies less than 6 months of age without a doctor's order.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.**

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child’s doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.

## Nasal Drainage, continued

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### When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if your child:

- Does not smile or show interest in play for at least a few minutes during a four-hour period
- Seems dehydrated (dried out):
  - No urine in six to eight hours in an infant younger than 1 year old
  - No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 1 year old
  - No tears when crying
  - Sunken eyes
  - Dry lips and mouth
- Starts vomiting
- Seems to be uncomfortable, even when held
- Seems to be breathing hard
- Develops a rash
- Has a fever lasting more than three days
- For signs of breathing problems
  - Fast, shallow breathing
  - Tightness in chest
  - Bluish color to lips and skin
  - Chest retractions (skin pulling in around ribs when breathing)

Also call your child's doctor if you have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

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