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Treating coughs and colds

Winter has arrived bringing us cool crisp mornings, stunning mountain views and... alas it also brings coughs and colds.

Coughs and colds have always been a part of our lives and usually are treated quite successfully with herbal remedies and grandmothers tips. Unfortunately today we tend to attempt to suppress all illnesses as they are a definite inconvenience and if one can take antibiotics and feel better in a day.... Why not?

Due to the availability of Antibiotics, we are causing a resistance of our bodies and the different illnesses to these Antibiotics. Our bodies are not given time to deal with an illness and therefore, can not build up immunity. The illnesses we suffer from, build their resistance to the antibiotics too, therefore the treatments become less effective.

As a mother of 3 sons of which 2 suffered from severe bronchitis, later diagnosed as asthma, then as bronchitis and finally diagnosed by myself as just being their weak spot, I know what it means to be up all night until you are desperate and exhausted, what it means to sit in the emergency unit of the nearest hospital at some ridiculous hour.

As A Nursing Sister and a Midwife, I know how often small children are treated for common illnesses with Antibiotics, where they are nor required or effective, what

risks one can take by not detecting certain illnesses which may have similar symptoms to coughs and colds on time and treating them accordingly.

I have decided to take the best of both worlds with my children, having received advice from many different sources over the years and having tried out all that seemed realistic this is what I have concluded;

To avoid coughs and colds, ensure that your family has a healthy diet with an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables. (Check this with a nutritionist in you area or on the internet)

A High intake of vitamin C (oranges, mandarins, tomatoes) will help boost your family's immunity.

Fluids are very important; a child should drink at least 1 litre a day of clear fluids, these being preferably water but also rooibos tea etc

Fresh air is so important, children will only catch cold, if they are not dressed appropriately. Being outside stimulates the circulation of the blood through the body and the Childs awareness and concentration.

Quick temperature changes however are not beneficial, as long as the temperatures are constant, your baby or child can adapt to it. Dressing your child using cardigans, hats and blankets (babies) , makes it easier for you to add or remove clothing as you see fit. Babies tend to drool, often resulting in their chest being permanently wet, by putting a bandana or bib around their neck and changing this regularly, this can be avoided.

Mountaineers say that if your feet are cold...put on a cap. This works 😊

Over heating the baby room, or house is not advised as this causes the child to perspire and this in turn causes quick cooling.

Ways to cure coughs and colds:

A humidifier or a big pot of boiled water (out of reach) in the room, keeps the air moist and loosens the phlegm on their chest, if you wish you can add an essential oil like Thyme. (Eucalyptus, Vicks and other strong ointments can cause an allergic reaction resulting in the child struggling to breathe)

Essential oils:

My favourites are Lavender (one drop on each corner of the bed or in bigger children, on their pillow) this soothes and relaxes

Thyme: rub 2 drops of thyme oil with some olive oil between your hands and apply to the babies chest and back in the evening before sleeping and in the morning , this keeps the chest nice and warm and helps loosen the Flem.

Homeopathic remedies can be taken by newborns and bigger children:

Euchina: this strengthens the immune system.

Belladonna: this relaxes and soothes coughing

Gelsemicum: this is a good general antiviral remedy, I suggest you contact a homeopath in your area for any further tips.

Speak to your local pharmacist about any natural remedies to loosen phlegm and soothe coughing, these have no side effects and are usually quite effective.

Dealing with fever:

If you and your partner do not have a family history of fever convulsions, the risk that your child will suffer from these is low; research has confirmed that Fever convulsions are mostly hereditary.

A child with fever under 39 degrees Celsius, is reacting to the illness, this is the bodies way of fighting the virus.

Modern medicine recommends that one does not try to intervene, as this interferes with the body's natural healing process.

I allow the fever to persist during the day, I am able to keep a watchful eye and check that it does not exceed 39.

By applying socks drenched in a mixture of 1 third vinaigrette and 2 thirds water, one can bring the fever down passively during the day, though at night before I go to bed I give a infant suppository (Panadol, or equivalent)

When to Seek medical attention!

Before visiting your Dr, phone her / his rooms, ask to speak with the Dr, describe the symptoms of your child's illness, tell him what it is that you are doing to treat the illness and ask her/him what is recommended. Your Dr will advise you whether you should come in or not.

Fever which persists for longer than 1 day, or does not react to the medication.

You suspect that there is something other than a common cold, wrong with your child.

Your child refuses to drink anything for (babies=12hrs) 24 hours.

Your baby, child has a rash or other symptoms coinciding with the fever.

Your baby is floppy and not responding to you as usual

As a result of the use of predominantly natural remedies, I am fortunate to say that my 3 boys are very rarely ill and when they are, they recover rapidly.

Spring will soon be here and with it will come a child with an increased ability to fight off what ever viruses next year will bring! You, mum and dad, will have survived another season of sniffs, WELL DONE!