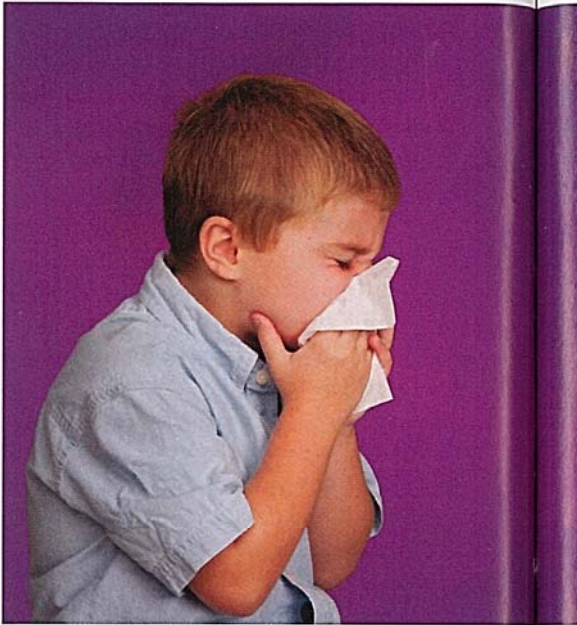


ASK A PEDIATRICIAN

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Is It a Sinus Infection or Just a Cold?

Parents often ask how they can distinguish a common cold (viral upper-respiratory infection) from a sinus infection (acute bacterial sinusitis). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, sinus infections should be considered in children with nasal congestion and/or cough when there are: 1) persistent symptoms for at least 10 days that are not improving; 2) worsening symptoms that were initially improving; and 3) severe onset of symptoms that include at least three days of high fever.

Contrary to popular belief, the color of nasal discharge does not help differentiate between the common cold and a sinus infection.

Sinus infections are treated with antibiotic medications. Antibiotics should not be prescribed for a common cold because they are ineffective in treating viruses, they can cause side effects such as diarrhea and allergic reaction, and their overuse is leading to antibiotic resistance.

Neither colds nor sinus infections are anything to “sneeze” at! With a focused history and physical examination, your pediatrician will be able to recommend the best treatment plan for your child. ■