

Cold and flu remedies doctors swear by

When your child is sniffling, sneezing and coughing, you want to help her feel better fast. So we asked doctors for the drug-free strategies they turn to when their own kids get sick

To clear congestion: Saline this way

As a mother of four, pediatrician Hana R. Solomon, M.D. author of Clearing the Air One Nose at a Time, has seen he share of stuffy noses. "I always used hypertonic buffered saline nasal washes two to three times a day when any of my children were stuffed up," she says. Hypertonic saline is saltier than conventional, or isotonic, saline. That makes it more effective at thinning thickened nasal secretions, shrinking swollen membranes and removing allergens, explains Dr. Solomon. What's more, the salty environment helps kill off infection-causing particles. "Ultimately, it reduces the need for medication." And it works immediately, says Dr. Solomon, who adds that although nasal sprays and washes will both work, it's best to find one that says it's buffered, since unbuffered products can be irritating to the nose. One to try: NeilMed NasaMist Hypertonic Saline Spray (\$9 for 4.2 oz., at drugstores).



To quell a cough: Dark chocolate

"When my kids were young, I'd give them dark chocolate for a cough," says father-of-five Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., author From Fatigued to Fantastic! It contains theobromine, a naturally occurring chemical that researchers at Imperial College London found to be 33 percent more effective at stopping persistent coughs than codeine. The compound calms activity of the vagus nerve, which runs from the lungs to the brain and triggers coughing. "Just two to three squares of dark chocolate eased my children's coughs within minutes and kept the cough away for three to six hours," says Dr. Teitelbaum.

To soothe a sore throat: A healing tea

"Organic Throat Coat Tea is one of my favorite sore throat remedies," says Lawrence Rosen, M.D., a father of two and coauthor of *Treatment Alternatives for Children*. "When my son was 10, he had a pretty bad viral sore throat, so I gave him 4 oz. of the caffeine-free tea every four hours." It contains licorice root (which blocks inflammation in the mucous membranes) and slippery elm and marshmallow root (which contain mucilages). These thick, gooey substances soothe and coat the mucous membranes of the throat, limiting irritation, explains Dr. Rosen. "It works like a charm!" he says. "My son was back to school the next day." (Traditional Medicinals Organic Throat Coat Tea, \$5 for 16 tea bags, at **drugstore.com**) *