

## Management of acute respiratory infections (ARIs) in children - Nursing Perspective

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**A**cute respiratory infections are the most common causes of under-five morbidity and mortality in India. The government and private sectors have taken lot of initiatives in bringing down the number of deaths and hospitalizations due to ARI. The management involves a combination of supportive care, specific treatments based on the underlying cause of the infection, and preventive measures. ARIs can range from mild illnesses, such as the common cold, to more severe conditions, like pneumonia or bronchiolitis. It's important to note that the management may vary depending on the specific diagnosis and severity of the infection. Always consult a healthcare professional for personalized advice.

Here are some general guidelines: **Supportive Care:** Ensure the child gets enough rest and stays hydrated. Encourage frequent breastfeeding or fluid intake for infants, and offer plenty of fluids to older children. Adequate rest helps the body fight off the infection, and proper hydration prevents dehydration, especially if there is a fever.

**Fever Management:** If the child has a fever, acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be used under the guidance of a healthcare provider. Avoid aspirin in children due to the risk of Reye's syndrome.

**Steam Inhalation:** Steam inhalation may provide relief for nasal congestion, but it should be used cautiously to prevent burns. Make sure to supervise and maintain a safe distance from hot water.

**Nasal Saline Drops:** For infants or young children with nasal congestion, saline drops can be used to help clear the nasal passages and improve breathing.

**Antibiotics (if bacterial):** Antibiotics are not effective against viral infections like the common cold but may be necessary if a bacterial infection, such as bacterial pneumonia or a severe ear infection is present. The decision to prescribe antibiotics is usually based on the child's symptoms and clinical examination.

**Antiviral Medications (if viral):** In certain situations, specific antiviral medications may be prescribed for certain viral infections like influenza (flu). These medications work best when started early in the course of the illness, so prompt medical attention is essential.

**Cough Management:** Avoid over-the-counter cough and cold medications in young children, as they can have limited efficacy and may cause side effects. Instead, consider using honey (for children over one year of age) to soothe a cough or other age-appropriate remedies recommended by a healthcare provider.

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**Hospitalization (if needed):** In severe cases, such as severe pneumonia or respiratory distress, hospitalization may be necessary for monitoring and advanced medical care.

**Preventive Measures:** Encourage proper hand washing to reduce the risk of transmission of infections. Immunization against preventable diseases like influenza and pertussis (whooping cough) is also essential to reduce the severity and spread of respiratory infections. Remember that self-diagnosis and self-medication are not recommended, especially in children. If your child has symptoms of an acute respiratory infection, it's important to consult a healthcare professional for proper evaluation and management. They can provide accurate diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and guidance on home care. The speaker would high light on the intensity of the problem in India and the management modes including nursing care.