

## Tested Negative for Flu, COVID, RSV, and Strep What's Next?

After testing for Flu A, Flu B, COVID, RSV, and Strep and receiving negative results, you or your child's symptoms are most likely caused by another mild viral illness. Below are some recommendations from our SmartMED team on how to manage your symptoms and feel better faster.

### + Recommended Over-The-Counter (OTC) Medications for Adults

With so many options available on store shelves, choosing the right product can feel overwhelming. Here are some over-the-counter medications that our SmartMED team and their families personally trust and use.

**Important:** Always read labels and use medications as directed. Many cold and flu products contain multiple active ingredients—be sure not to double up on medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. If you take prescription medications or have chronic conditions (especially high blood pressure), check with your pharmacist or provider before starting a new OTC product.

### + For Pain and Fever Relief

- Tylenol (Acetaminophen)
- Advil (Ibuprofen)
- Excedrin Migraine

### + For Multi-Symptom Relief

- THERAFLU Flu Relief Max Strength (Contains 1000mg acetaminophen)
  - This is a powder you mix into hot water.
- DayQuil and NyQuil
- Coricidin HBP Maximum Strength Multi-Symptom Flu
  - This is safe for people with high blood pressure. May cause drowsiness.
- Sudafed Head Congestion and Flu Severe
- Alka-Seltzer PLUS Severe Cold Powerfast Fizz
  - Dissolvable seltzer tablets you can drop in water.
- Sambucol Cold and Flu Relief
  - This is a more natural option that uses elderberry and vitamins to support your immune system.
- Mucinex Nightshift Cold and Flu (Contains acetaminophen)
  - Can cause drowsiness. Available in liquid or caplet form for ages 12+.

## + For Cough and Congestion

**Caution:** Some decongestants—such as pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine—may raise blood pressure. Avoid these if you have high blood pressure unless directed by a provider.

- Mucinex Maximum Strength (Guaifenesin)
  - Expectorant that loosens mucus for chest congestion.
- Mucinex DM (Guaifenesin and Dextromethorphan)
  - Combines an expectorant and cough suppressant.
- Sudafed Sinus Congestion Relief Maximum Strength (Pseudoephedrine)
  - Helps relieve nasal congestion. Non-drowsy.
  - A More effective version is available behind the pharmacy counter (ID required, no prescription needed).
- Robitussin Maximum Strength DM (Guaifenesin and dextromethorphan)
  - Liquid expectorant and cough suppressant for ages 12+.
- Delsym 12 Hour Cough (dextromethorphan)
  - Liquid cough suppressant.
- Afrin No Drip Severe Congestion Nasal Spray
  - Use for no more than 3 days in a row to prevent rebound congestion. Safe for ages 6+.

## + For Sore Throat

- Saltwater rinses.
  - Mix ½ teaspoon of table salt in 8 ounces of warm water. Swish and gargle the mixture 2 to 3 times a day for the next few days.
- Throat lozenges.
  - Cepacol Extra Strength is a great option.
- Chloraseptic Max Strength Sore Throat Spray
  - Contains a temporary numbing agent that works on contact.

## + For Nausea and Diarrhea

- Dramamine
  - This is a motion sickness medication but can help with nausea symptoms.
- Pepto-Bismol
  - Helps soothe stomach discomfort. Not for children under 12.
- Ginger lozenges
  - Ginger is a natural remedy that helps soothe stomach discomfort.
- Plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.



- Gatorade, Pedialyte, or similar

#### + For Allergy Flare-Ups

- Flonase (Fluticasone)
  - This is a nasal spray. Flonase can take several days of consistent use before full effect is noticed.

Active Ingredient	Common Brand Name	Additional Information
Diphenhydramine	Benadryl	Quick acting, can cause drowsiness, given every 4-6 hours, may be found in cough/cold medications and should not be given with those medications
Loratadine	Claritin	Can be used for more persistent or chronic symptoms, given once a day
Cetirizine	Zyrtec	Can be used for more persistent or chronic symptoms, given once a day
Fexofenadine	Allegra	Can be used for more persistent or chronic symptoms, given once a day

**Note:** Although these differ in their ingredients, they should not be used in combination.

#### + Comforting Sick Children at Home

Here are some over-the-counter medications that our SmartMED team and their families personally trust and use.

**Important:** *Always read labels and use medications as directed. Many cold and flu products contain multiple active ingredients—be sure not to double up on medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen.*

#### + Lowering a Fever

- Fever reducing medications.



- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be given to help lower a fever.
- Do not give aspirin to children.
- Be sure to follow the instructions and dosing that will be outlined on the box of the medication.
- We like alternating acetaminophen and ibuprofen every 4 hours if needed.

Active Ingredient	Common Brand Name	Additional Medication Information
Acetaminophen	Tylenol, PediaCare, Little Remedies	Multiple strengths available, give every 4-6 hours, can be found in some cold/cough medications
Ibuprofen	Motrin, Advil, PediaCare	Multiple strengths available, give every 6-8 hours

- Lukewarm baths: Sitting in a lukewarm bathtub may help to lower a fever.
  - Warm washcloths can also be used and placed on your child's tummy, chest, neck, or underarms. Remove and change wash cloths as soon as they cool off.
- Encourage fluids and rest: Offer lots of fluids throughout the day. Water, Gatorade, Pedialyte, and popsicles are all good options.

#### + Soothing a Sore Throat

- For children over the age of 1: warm fluids like water, herbal tea with honey, or apple juice. Do not give honey to children under 1.
- For children over the age of 4: throat lozenges may be introduced under supervision.
- For children over the age of 6 and able to gargle without swallowing: mix ½ teaspoon of table salt in 8 ounces of warm water. Have them swish and gargle the mixture 2 to 3 times a day for the next few days. Do not let your child swallow the water, have them spit it out.

Reference: [Sore Throat Basics](#) | [Sore Throat](#) | [CDC](#)

#### + Reducing Cough and Cold Symptoms

- Sleeping slightly elevated can help older children cough less at night.
- Use saline rinses and gentle suctioning to clear mucus.



- In general, it is not recommended for children under the age of 6 to use over the counter cough and cold medications unless directed by a provider.
  - Do not use on children under the age of 4.
- Most cold/cough medications found over the counter contain multiple active ingredients. If giving other medications, such as allergy medicine or fever reducers, check the packaging to ensure that the same ingredient is not being given twice.
- Here are some common cold and cough medications, every family is different so use what works best for you.
  - Children's Mucinex Cough and Congestion
  - Children's Mucinex Multi-Symptom Cold
  - Children's Nyquil Cold and Cough Medicine
  - Children's Robitussin Cough and Cold CF
  - Children's Robitussin Cough and Cold Long-Acting
  - Children's Sudafed PE Cough and Cold
  - Dimetapp Cold and Cough
  - Dimetapp Multisymptom Cold and Flu
  - PediaCare Cough and Cold
  - PediaCare Cough and Congestion
  - Mucinex Children's Cough and Congestion
    - Suitable for kids age 4 and up, comes as a fun, fizzy powder!
  - Hyland's Organic Kids All-in-One Cough Syrup
  - Zarbee's Children's Daytime Cough Syrup + Mucus

Reference: [Common Children's Coughs Explained | Children's Healthcare of Atlanta](#)

#### + Reducing Congestion and Runny Nose

- Clear mucus with saline rinses, suctioning, or gentle nose blowing.
- Humidifiers can add moisture to nasal passages and help relieve congestion.
- Over the counter antihistamines may provide some relief for allergy and allergy-like symptoms.
  - Here are some we recommend:

Active Ingredient	Common Brand Name	Additional Information
Diphenhydramine	Benadryl	Quick acting, can cause drowsiness, given every 4-6 hours, may be found in cough/cold medications and should

		not be given with those medications
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### + If Your Child Isn't Eating

As long as your child is staying hydrated and alert, a short-term decrease in appetite is normal during illness.

- Start small with snacks throughout the day and work back up to feeding full meals.
- Always encourage fluids to avoid dehydration.

### + How to Protect Others

- If you have a fever, you are contagious. You are contagious until fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications and symptoms are improving.
- If your child has a fever, they are contagious. They are contagious until fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications and symptoms are improving.
- Keep children home from daycare or school until fever free.
- Wash hands often, cover coughs and sneezes, and avoid sharing drinks or utensils.

### + When to Seek Further Care

Contact your provider if you or your child:

- Have a fever lasting more than 3 days.



- Develop shortness of breath, chest pain, or dehydration
  - Signs of dehydration:
    - Hard or fast breathing
    - Child (4 months and older) has less than 3 wet diapers a day or pees less than 3 times a day
    - Dry or sticky mouth
    - Very dark urine
    - Decreased urine output
    - No tears when crying
    - Sunken-looking eyes
- Are worsening instead of improving after 5-7 days.

Most viral illnesses improve with rest, fluids, and time.

We're here to support you — reach out if you have questions or if symptoms change.

#### **+ Helpful Links**

[Preventing and Managing Common Cold](#)

[How to Tell the Difference Between Flu, COVID-19, Cold and Allergies in Kids | Children's Healthcare of Atlanta](#)

[Tips for treating common cold for kids, toddlers & babies | Texas Children's](#)  
[Managing Seasonal Allergies in Kids | Children's Healthcare of Atlanta](#)