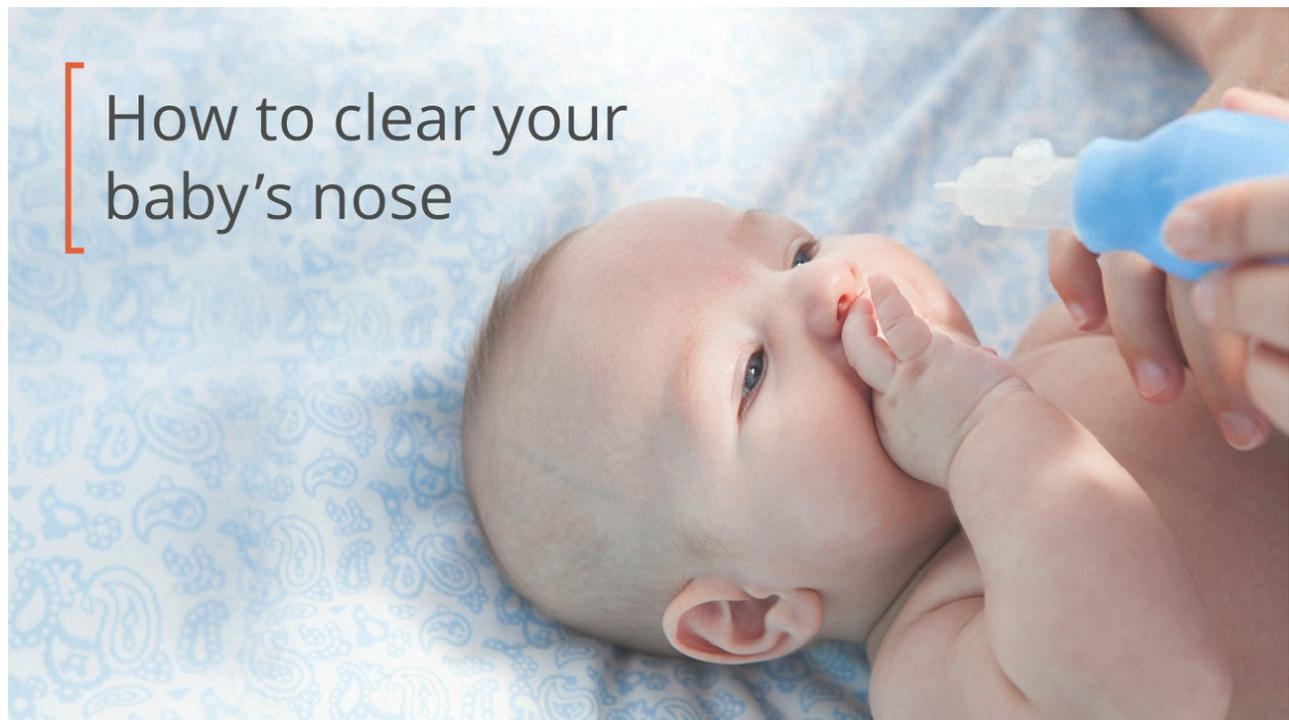


7 Ways to Treat Congestion in Babies

www.healthline.com/health/parenting/treat-congestion-in-babies



Is there anything worse than having a sick and stuffy baby?

As a mom of four and a nurse, I hate that feeling of helplessness that comes with having a sick baby. When a baby is young, it seems like there are few options for treatment. Most medicines that might help an older child or an adult with congestion just aren't safe for babies.

And it's not like your little one can tell you when they're uncomfortable. So for the most part, you might be feeling like you have no idea how to handle a baby with nasal congestion.

Fortunately, there are a few tricks of the trade that can help ease your baby's nasal congestion. If you're dealing with a fussy and stuffy baby, here are a few ways to treat it.

1. The shower

There's nothing like the steam from a shower to help open up your baby's nasal passages. If you're comfortable, you can hop right in the shower with your baby. If you have a partner, enlist them for help to hand off the baby when you're done. Babies may be cute, but they can also be quite slippery!

If you don't want to actually get wet, just turn the shower on hot, close the door, and stand in your bathroom to allow the steam and warmth to help open up your baby's nasal passages for a few moments of relief.

2. A cool mist humidifier

Because you probably don't want to stand in the shower all night, you can also invest in a regular humidifier or a cool mist humidifier to help keep your baby's room or sleeping area humid.

Dry air can make a stuffy nose worse, so putting moisture back into the air will help make it easier for your baby to breathe. I personally have always found that regular humidifiers work much better than the cool mist humidifiers. But during the summer months or with a very young baby especially, it may be dangerous to let the room overheat, so you may want to just stick with a cool mist humidifier. The cool mist humidifier will help keep the air moist, without heating it.

3. Saline drops

If your baby is uncomfortable from mucus lodged lower in their nose, or if you frequently wiping their nasal areas is causing dry or cracked skin, moistening the mucus with saline drops might help.

Ask your pediatrician about saline drops, which are actually a gel-like substance or liquid that goes right in the nose and helps loosen and thin the secretions so you can then remove them.

4. Nasal aspirators

I somehow went almost seven years of parenting without realizing that such a contraption existed, but there actually is a device that will suck out your child's boogers.

There are manual and electric nasal aspirators, depending on which version you would prefer. The manual aspirators have a suction connection that requires you to literally suck your baby's snot out with your own mouth (although you won't actually touch the snot, you provide the power). The electrical version does the work for you. Or to really save money, you can simply go with the blue bulb aspirator the hospital sends you home with. It couldn't be easier!

And keep in mind that you should only use the aspirator if you can see your baby's snot, because the aspirator won't be able to suction mucus high up in the sinuses, and too much suction may harm your baby. Also, if you suction too often, your baby's nose may become irritated or swollen, making them more uncomfortable.

5. Don't give over-the-counter decongestants

I know it's tempting, but whatever you do, don't give your baby any sort of over-the-counter nasal decongestant or cold medicine. They're not safe for babies and can cause serious harm and even death.

6. Nasal irrigation

One study showed that nasal irrigation, or rinsing out your baby's nasal passages, can be very helpful. The irrigation helps get rid of the mucus that is making your baby uncomfortable and it also may help wash out any bacteria or viruses that are lurking (though this effect would be very short-term).

You can buy over-the-counter saline spray or wash and apply according to the directions.

7. Eucalyptus or menthol rubs and oils

We all know the classic menthol rub Vicks, but you should avoid putting any eucalyptus or menthol rub or essential oil directly on your baby. The oils or ointments may irritate the skin and the vapors may be so strong that they can actually cause breathing difficulty in your baby.

If you would like to try something to help ease your baby's discomfort, talk with your doctor about safe ways to use a soothing ointment like Vicks.

Though there are no studies showing that these treatments help congestion or other cold symptoms in babies, you may, depending on your baby's age, be able to apply Vicks to the feet, so it's away from the baby's face. Or you could use a humidifier or diffuser that will put the vapors into the air.



Chaunie Brusie, B.S.N., is a registered nurse with experience in labor and delivery, critical care, and long-term care nursing. She lives in Michigan with her husband and four young children, and she is the author of the book "Tiny Blue Lines."