

# Nurse mom

One of the many roles mothers (and fathers) play is the medical care giver when our children are sick. My household has been no exception, as I tended to three ailing little boys who were at once my sons and my patients.

It started with Frank, who was running slight fevers all week. His cheeks were as rosy as Santa's, and he slobbered like one of the reindeer. Of course, he was fussy to boot. I wondered if it was his ears, but I tugged on them a little and got no reaction. When I caught Frank nibbling on his fingers as tears streamed down his face, I knew what was wrong.

So, why didn't I rush to the doctor's? Even though Frank couldn't tell me what was wrong, the same symptoms had appeared before. I used my senses and prior experiences to diagnose the condition: teething. I'd seen this many times before in Frank and his big brother, Collin. After all, children wind up with 20 baby teeth. I treated Frank with acetaminophen for the fever and pain when either of which was too intense. I also threw in a few cold treats and warm hugs. Before I knew it, he was all smiles.

Leo was next to succumb to bodily discomfort. In his case, it was expected. Earlier that day, he had received his two month immunizations, a remarkable dose of antibodies packed into three scream-provoking shots. But, it was necessary to protect him from life-threatening illnesses and eventually to get him into school. It's just a shame that he had to feel so awful when it was done.

Leo is a very calm baby, who only fusses when it's time to eat or be changed. But, after his immunizations, he was as crabby and as needy as his pediatrician said he would be. I gave him acetaminophen for the pain and held him as often, close, and long as I could.



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When it came to giving him his medication, I was sure to use the dosing chart from my pediatrician, which I keep taped inside the door to my medicine cabinet. (Since there was a recall on the drug in 2012, manufacturers no longer list the dosing for children under 24 lbs. The information is not even available online.) Once I used my chart to determine the proper amount of medication for Leo, I gave him some to make him more comfortable. He sighed and drifted off into a peaceful sleep.

Before we knew it, we received a phone call from my mother-in-law, who was taking Collin to a train garden. He threw up. Patrick went to get him while I stayed with the other two patients. Collin got sick several more times on the way home.

When they got to the house, I immediately isolated Collin to my bedroom. It would keep the little boys, whose immune systems were already down, from catching his stomach bug. There's a bathroom attached to the room and a TV, so Collin would have everything he needed, including two doting parents to take care of him.

In the saddest voice, he asked if he could watch "Frosty the Snowman." As soon as I put it on, he fell asleep. I took his temperature. It was slightly elevated. I covered him up, scrubbed my hands, and went to check on the others, who were asleep and happy, respectively.

When Collin woke up sick again, I rubbed his back and whispered to him, "It's okay." For some reason, he apologized for being sick. I chuckled and offered him some soup, which he turned down. "Just hold me," he said. At 4 years old, he doesn't make requests like that very often, so I obliged.

Patrick tended to Leo and Frank, who were eating well and keeping the changing table busy. I stayed by Collin's side until he said he was thirsty. I gave him a sippy cup full of electrolyte beverage. He still couldn't keep it down. I stayed by his side.

In the middle of the night, I found Collin standing by the nightstand, trying to open a bottle of water. "I need water to make me better," he said. I tried to talk him out of it, explaining that it might make him sick again. After his tears wouldn't stop, I told him to go ahead. So he did. And he was fine.

Taking care of my three sick little ones gave me a new perspective on a few things:

- With three children, Patrick and I could no longer divide and conquer. One of us would find their hands a little more full.
- I have a slight understanding of what it must be like to be a nurse, like my mom. Putting out little fires all over the place, smiling even though you're worn down.
- I can only imagine how God does it. Sees us hurting and sends us healing. It's no wonder answered prayers can take some time!
- God gives us each other to take care of one another. Compassion for the sick and the poor enable us to do His work. He gives us patience beyond comprehension to do unglamorous deeds. But, He rewards us by letting us know we are loved in return. We get this message directly from Himself and through the ones we serve.