

COUGHS AND COLDS

COUGH MEDICINE: Over the counter cough and cold medicines can cause serious side effects in young children.

The risks of using these medicines outweigh any benefits from reducing symptoms. Therefore, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has recommended that OTC cough and cold medicines never be used in children under 4 years of age. From age 4-6, they should be used "only if recommended by your child's doctor". After age 6, the medicines are safe to use, but follow the dosage instruction on the package.

Fortunately, you can easily treat coughs and colds in young children without these non-prescription medicines.

HOME REMEDIES: A good home remedy is safe, inexpensive, and as beneficial as OTC medicines. Here are a few:

1. Runny nose - Just suction it or blow it. And remember, when your child's nose runs like a faucet, it's getting rid of viruses. Medicines: antihistamines such as Benadryl do not help the average cold. However, they are useful and approved if the runny nose is due to nasal allergies (hay fever).

2. Blocked nose - use nasal washes. Use saline nose spray or drops to loosen up the dried mucus, followed by blowing or suctioning the nose.

If not available, warm water will work fine. Instill 2-3 drops in each nostril one at a time then suction or blow. Teens can just splash warm water into the nose. Repeat until the return is clear. For infants on a bottle or breast, use nose drops before feedings. Saline nose drops and sprays are available in all pharmacies without a prescription. To make your own, add 1/2 teaspoon of table salt to 1 cup/8 ounces of warm tap water. With sticky, stubborn mucus, remove with a wet cotton swab. There is no medicine that can remove dried mucus or pus from the nose.

3. Coughing - Use homemade cough medicines. Age 3 months to 1 year: give warm clear fluids (e.g. water or apple juice), about 1-3 teaspoons four times per day. Avoid honey because it can cause infantile botulism. Under 3 months, see your child's doctor. Age 1 year and older: use 1/2 to 2 tsp of honey as needed. It thins the secretions and loosens the cough. If honey is not available, corn syrup can be used. Recent research has shown that honey is better than drugstore cough syrups at reducing the frequency and the severity of nighttime coughing. Age 6 and older: Use cough drops to coat the irritated throat. If not available, hard candy can be used. For coughing spasms, expose the child to warm mist from a shower.

4. Fluids - Help your child drink plenty of fluids. Staying well hydrated thins the body's secretions, making it easier to cough and blow the nose.

5. Humidity - If the air in your home is dry, use a humidifier. Moist air keeps the nasal mucus from drying up and lubricates the airway. Running a warm shower for a while can also help humidify the air.

TREATMENT IS NOT ALWAYS NEEDED:

If symptoms aren't bothering your child, they don't need medicine or home remedies. Many children with a cough or nasal congestion are happy, play

normally and sleep peacefully. Only treat symptoms if they cause discomfort, interrupt sleep, or really bother your child such as a hacking cough. Since fevers are beneficial, only treat them if they slow your child down or cause some discomfort. That doesn't usually occur until 102 degrees F or higher. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or

ibuprofen (Motrin/Advil) can be safely used in these instances to treat fever or pain. See dosage tables for indications and age limitations.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR:

Call immediately if breathing becomes difficult or rapid; your child starts acting very sick; your child is under 3 months old and has a fever.

Call during office hours if the fever lasts more than 3 days unless your child is under three months old; the nose symptoms last more than 14 days; the eyes develop a yellow discharge; you can't unblock the nose enough for your infant to drink adequate fluids; you think your child may have an earache or sinus pain; your child's sore throat lasts more than 5 days; and you have other questions or concerns.