



# Cough and Cold

## Medication Guidelines for Children

### Cough and Cold Medicine

While it's difficult to see your child with the sniffles or a cough, giving the wrong medicine or too much medicine can make a small problem much worse.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends against giving any over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medicine to children under the age of four.

Children between 4 and 6 years of age should only be given OTC cough and cold medication if recommended by the child's doctor. These medications can cause side effects that include difficulty breathing, dizziness, increased heart rate and high blood pressure.

When your child is old enough to take cough and cold medicine, do not give medicine that is meant for adults. If you are unsure about the right kind of medicine for your child, check with your doctor or pharmacist. If you do not understand the instructions or how to use the measuring tool, do not use the medicine.

Read the drug facts box on the container to see how much medicine to give. For children under 23 months of age, ask your doctor before giving.

When giving cough and cold medicine, it is safest to use a single product designed to relieve only the symptoms that are present. There are many different antihistamines and decongestants available, and it's easy to give too much of a specific type of medicine if you use multiple products.

### Acetaminophen

Acetaminophen is often used to reduce fever and pain associated with the common cold and flu.

It can be very toxic when too much is given, when it is given too often, or when more than one product containing acetaminophen is given.

In order to avoid an overdose, talk to your physician or call the Poison Center right away and follow dosing recommendations closely.

### Dosing Tools

Use only the dosing cup, spoon or syringe that came with the medicine. If no dosing tool was provided, use either a kitchen measuring spoon or purchase a spoon or syringe designed specifically for giving medicine.

Using a regular spoon from the kitchen drawer can result in giving up to three times too much medicine.



If you have questions about **over the counter cough and cold medication**, please call 1-800-222-1222.

Specially trained pharmacists and nurses are available 24/7 to assist you with your emergency and answer your questions.

**Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information**

Website:

**OklahomaPoison.org**

Some content adapted from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Healthychildren.org

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## When to Consult a Physician

- A fever accompanied by vomiting or rash.
- Difficulty breathing: The child is breathing fast (more than 40 times a minute) or working hard to breathe.
- Child is unusually fussy, looks ill or has a history of seizures.
- A child younger than 3 months with a temp of 100.4° or higher.
- A child 3 to 6 months old with a temperature of 101° or higher for more than one day.
- A fever that lasts more than three days in a child 2 years old or older.
- A child of any age with a temp of 104° or higher.
- If your child is sick for more than a week, even if a fever isn't present. Your child could have a sinus or ear infection that requires treatment.
- Signs that something is wrong: A child who seems very lethargic or who, after being given medicine, does not engage in any periods of play.

## How do you relieve cough and cold symptoms ?

- Saline nose spray can help ease stuffy noses.
- Plenty of fluids: Any warm liquid — apple juice or even water — can help relieve congestion and soothe throats. Citrus drinks like orange juice or lemonade can irritate throats.
- Getting plenty of rest, including naps and lounging, is important for recovery.
- Flavored ice pops can provide a source of liquid that soothes throats and hydrates the body.
- Warm or cold packs: Apply around congested sinuses. Both can make you feel more comfortable, but avoid a warm pack if the child is running a fever, as it will raise the temperature.
- Chicken soup: It's warm. It's easy on the stomach and the steam ventilating into the nasal passages can serve as a natural decongestant.
- Honey often is recommended to soothe sore throats, but it **should never be given** to children less than 1 year of age because of the risk of infant botulism, a rare type of food poisoning that only affects very young children.
- Do not use chest rub on a child less than 2 years old. It can actually make it hard to breathe and worsen symptoms in very young children.