

Parents still give cough medicine to infants despite FDA warning

June 1 2009, By Fred Tasker

Nearly two years after the FDA issued a formal advisory urging parents not to give over-the-counter cough and cold medicines to infants younger than 2 years old without a doctor's advice, a new study says many parents still are giving them to children as young as 13 months.

A major reason: misleading labels that use the word "infant" and display graphics of teddy bears, small [children](#) and other similar symbols.

"It's a wake-up call to those of us who work daily to provide healthcare to children, and to the public health and pharmacy communities," said Dr. Lee Sanders, associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. He co-authored the study with researchers from University of Wisconsin, Vanderbilt University and others.

The researchers interviewed 182 parents and other caregivers of children 1 and younger. They asked them about their use of four common over-the-counter [cough](#) and cold medications whose labels warn not to use them in children younger than 2 without a doctor's advice.

They found that 86 percent of the time, the caregivers misunderstood the labels and thought the products were OK to use in children younger than 2. More than half the caregivers said they would give the medicines to a 13-month-old child.

The study does not name the offending drug manufacturers, he said,

because the medicines no longer are on drugstore shelves. But he urged the FDA, FTC and other government agencies to pass new restrictions on such labels.

"This is true across the industry," he said. "We would like to see the rules standardized."

He also urged [parents](#) to be more careful in reading labels on over-the-counter medicines.

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