

Do your kids really need cough & cold meds?

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(HealthDay)—When children have colds, parents may want to hold off on using cough and cold medicines, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration suggests.

Most [children](#) get better on their own, and cough or [cold medicines](#) won't change the natural course of a cold or make it go away faster.

Also, some cough and cold medicines can have [serious side effects](#), such as slowed breathing, which can be life-threatening, especially in infants and [young children](#), the FDA warned.

The agency doesn't recommend over-the-counter (OTC) medicines for cough and cold symptoms in children younger than 2, and the products' labels advise against giving them to children younger than 4.

These products can harm children if they get more than the recommended dose, take the [medicine](#) too often, or take more than one product that contains the same drug. For example, taking both a pain reliever containing acetaminophen and cough and cold medicine containing acetaminophen.

Don't give children medicines that are packaged and made for adults because adult medicines may overdose a child, the FDA said.

It also noted that there are no approved homeopathic cough and cold medicines for children, even though they can be found online and in stores.

The FDA offered tips for relieving [cough](#) and cold symptoms in infants and children.

Encourage children to drink plenty of liquids to stay hydrated, especially warm drinks to soothe the throat.

A cool mist humidifier can make breathing easier by decreasing congestion in nasal passages, and saline nose drops or sprays can keep nasal passages moist and help avoid stuffiness.

Nasal suctioning with a bulb syringe or a similar product works very well for children younger than 1 year old.

Acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be used to reduce fever, aches and pain. Carefully read and follow the instructions or talk to your pharmacist or health care provider about dosage.

Call your doctor if your child has any of the following symptoms:

- A fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher in an infant 2 months or younger.
- A fever of 102 degrees F or higher in children at any age.
- Blue lips.
- Labored breathing, including nostrils widening with each breath; wheezing; fast breathing; the ribs showing with each breath, or shortness of breath.
- Severe headache.
- Not eating or drinking, with signs of dehydration (such as decreased urination).
- Excessive crankiness or sleepiness.
- Persistent ear pain.
- If the child is getting worse.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [cough and cold treatments](#).

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