



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

**Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

## Cough and Cold Medicines

There are many cough and cold medicines you can buy without a prescription. This is called over-the-counter (OTC). OTC pediatric cough and cold medicines will not help symptoms get better faster, and they may also cause side effects. Use OTC medicines with caution based on your child's symptoms, age, and weight.

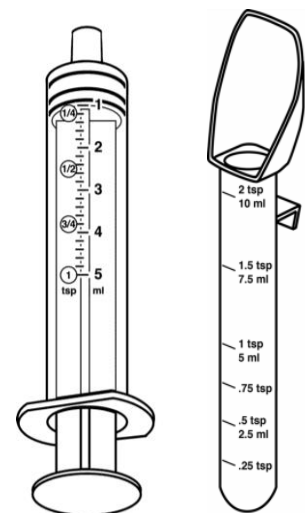
### FDA and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Recommendations for OTC Cough and Cold Medicines

<u>Age</u>	<u>Give Cough or Cold Medicines?</u>
Less than 4 years old	NO
Ages 4 to 6 years old	Only if approved by your child's doctor
7 years and older	YES when given correctly

- These medicines are not safe if they are given too often.
- These medicines are not safe if you give a dose that is too high for your child's age and weight.
- Use a pediatric measuring device or the measuring cup that comes with the medicine (Picture 1). Do not use a regular kitchen spoon.

### Active Ingredients

Many cold and cough medicines have more than one active ingredient. An active ingredient is the actual medicine in the product you buy. Some medicines have more than one active ingredient, and many ingredients are in many different OTC medicines. Too much of one ingredient can cause serious harm to a child.



**Picture 1** Use a pediatric measuring device for liquid medicines.

It is important to check the label of all OTC's before giving. This will prevent your child from getting too much of the same type of medicine. Do not give more than one OTC with the same "active" ingredient listed on the label. The chart below lists some common active ingredients.

Generic Name of Active Ingredient	Class	Uses	Brand Name Examples
Guaifenesin	Expectorant	Brings up mucus	Mucinex <sup>®</sup> , Robitussin <sup>®</sup>
Dextromethorphan	Cough Suppressant	Reduces cough	Robitussin <sup>®</sup> DM; anything with 'DM' in the name
Chlorpheniramine Brompheniramine Diphenhydramine	Antihistamine	Allergies, itchiness	Benadryl <sup>®</sup> , Chlor-Trimeton <sup>®</sup> and MANY MORE
Phenylephrine Pseudoephedrine	Decongestant	Nasal stuffiness or congestion	Sudafed <sup>®</sup> , Sudafed PE <sup>®</sup> , Claritin D <sup>®</sup>
Honey or Agave	Cough Suppressant	Reduces cough	Zarbee's <sup>®</sup>

## How to Treat Cough and Cold

There are safer ways to treat your child's cough and cold than using OTC cough and cold medicines:

- Have your child drink plenty of fluids, mainly water, chicken soup, or broths. Limit fruit juice and sports drinks to avoid sugar.
- For a cough, mix 1 to 2 teaspoons of honey in warm lemon water. **Do NOT give honey to children younger than 1 year old.**
- Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep.
- Use saline nasal spray and a bulb syringe to clear congestion before eating or sleeping.
- Use a cool mist humidifier in your child's room. Do not use a warm humidifier. It can cause burns.
- To soothe a sore throat, older children can suck non-medicated lozenges or gargle with warm salt water. To make the salt water, mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of table salt in 8 ounces (1 cup) of warm water.

- You may use these medicines to help bring down a fever or help with aches and pains. Be sure to read the label and give the correct dose:
  - Acetaminophen (Children's/Infant's Tylenol®)
  - Ibuprofen (Children's or Infant's Motrin® or Advil®)
- Do not give your child aspirin or products that contain aspirin (Picture 2).
- Do not give your child medicine labeled for use by adults.
- Always read drug facts on the label for active ingredients. This will help you understand what the medicine is for. It will also help you make sure you are not giving too much of the same type of medicine if you are using more than one product.



**Picture 2** Do not give your child products that contain aspirin.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor or health care provider if your child:

- Has a scratchy throat (hoarse), cannot talk, or complains of a sore throat.
- Has a cough that is high-pitched or has a barking sound.
- Has problems breathing or is wheezing or grunting with breathing.
- Turns a blue color or very pale.
- Complains of ear pain, pulls their ears, or rolls their head from side to side.
- Has problems swallowing or refuses to take liquids for 4 or more hours.
- Does not feel like playing or does not “act right.”
- Has a fever that does not come down or go away after treatment.

Please follow these guidelines for fever:

- **Under 2 months of age:** fever is over 100.4° Fahrenheit (F) or 38° Celsius (C) by rectum (baby's bottom).
- **Under age 2 years:** after 1 day, fever is over 102° F (38.9° C) by rectum or over 103° F (39.4° C) under the arm, on the forehead or by ear.
- **Age 2 years or older:** after 3 days, fever is over 102° F (38.9° C) by mouth or by rectum or over 103° F (39.4° C) under the arm, on the forehead, or by ear. Oral temperatures are not recommended for children younger than 4.