

Cautions with Pediatric Cough and Cold Products

A number of nonprescription infant cough and cold products were voluntarily taken off the market by some manufacturers in 2007. These products were used to treat cold symptoms like a runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, or cough in very young children. The products removed were those containing combinations of antihistamines (i.e., diphenhydramine, brompheniramine, chlorpheniramine), decongestants (i.e., pseudoephedrine, phenylephrine), and cough suppressants (dextromethorphan). Cough and cold products for older children are still available, but may have a warning on their labels not to use them in younger children.

There is concern that these ingredients may not be safe in children younger than 6 years old. There have been many reports of accidental overdose with the use of these drugs. A few children have died after using them. Also, there is no good proof that cough/cold medicines work in young children, so any minor benefits from use of these products may not be worth the possible risks.

What Should I Do Now?

- Do not use any cough/cold medicine in children under the age of 6 years old unless you first check with your healthcare practitioner.
- Do not use antihistamine products to make a child sleepy.
- Do not give your young child medicine that's supposed to be used in older children or adults.
- Read and follow the directions on medicine bottles carefully. Be sure to read the "Drug Facts" on the label and note the ingredients and warnings.
- Do not use two products at the same time that contain the same ingredients.
- When giving a child any medicine, use a calibrated dosing cup, dropper, or dosing syringe to make sure you measure the right dose. Do not use a spoon from your kitchen.

Other Ways to Keep Your Infant Comfortable

- Have your child drink plenty of fluids so they don't become dehydrated.
- Single-ingredient pain/fever relievers like acetaminophen (e.g., *Tylenol*) or ibuprofen (e.g., *Advil*) are still okay to use and can help make your child more comfortable. These medicines come in drops for infants, liquid (elixir) for toddlers, and chewable tablets for older children. The infant drops are more concentrated than the liquid elixir for toddlers. Do not switch back and forth between different products or you may give your child too much or too little medicine.
- For congestion, keep your child upright, or try gentle nasal suctioning, saline nose drops, or a room humidifier.

When to Call Your Doctor

You should call your doctor if your child:

- is under 3 months old.
- has had a fever for more than 24 hours if your child is under 2 years.
- has ear pain or a severe sore throat.
- has symptoms that don't improve within 10 to 14 days.