

# Do not recommend, prescribe or use cough medicines in children

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**Coughing is generally a normal defense mechanism of the body and is mostly related to acute respiratory infections in children.**

## **What is known about cough medicine:**

- Cough medicines have not been proven to be effective and can have potentially serious side effects.
- Many products have more than one ingredient, increasing the risk of accidental overdose, particularly when combined with other medications.

## **How to talk with patients and parents about cough medicine:**

- Coughing is generally a normal defense mechanism of the body.
- Research shows that cough medications for common colds – both chemically formulated or plant-based - are not effective and can have potentially serious side effects.
- Many cough medicine products have more than one ingredient, increasing the risk of accidental overdose, particularly when combined with other medications.
- You can give the following advice:
  - Do not expose the child to cigarette smoke.
  - Provide a good indoor environment with a humidity of 50–60 % and a room temperature of 18°C.
  - Elevate the child's upper body.
  - Nasal irrigation with normal saline in case of post-nasal drip coughing.
  - Offer honey to children aged 12 months and older, with a teaspoon or melted in tea.
- Try a wait-and-see approach, reassess clinical state in a few weeks.

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**This EAP recommendation is in accordance with Choosing Wisely recommendations of:**

- Switzerland: [www.paediatricschweiz.ch/choosingwisely](http://www.paediatricschweiz.ch/choosingwisely)
- Canada: [cps.ca/en/tools-outils/choosing-wisely-canada](http://cps.ca/en/tools-outils/choosing-wisely-canada)
- USA AAP/FDA: [www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/should-you-give-kids-medicine-coughs-and-colds#](http://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/should-you-give-kids-medicine-coughs-and-colds#)
- Finland: [www.kaypahoito.fi/en/?s=respiratory+infection](http://www.kaypahoito.fi/en/?s=respiratory+infection)

## References:

- Korppi M. Cough and cold medicines should not be recommended for children. *Acta Paediatr.* 2021 Aug;110(8):2301-2302. [PMID: 33811382](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33811382/)
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