

[IMAGE]

Cough Relief the Natural Way

By Editorial Staff

Remember when "A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down" was the catch phrase of the day? Well, soon it might be, "A spoonful of honey means you don't need any medicine," because research suggests honey is an effective remedy for childhood cough.

While we're mired in the thick of another cold and flu season, it's time to remind parents of two important points: First, the Food and Drug Administration says cough and cold medications are not appropriate for children ages 6 and younger and may actually be dangerous; and second, research suggests honey may be the best treatment of all for helping children suffering from cough and related symptoms.

Let's deal with the safety issue first. Over the past several years, the FDA has progressively investigated over-the-counter cough and cold medications, many either with dosing instructions for adults and children or for children only, depending on the type/brand. With little research done involving children only (after all, what parent would want their child to be the guinea pig in one of those studies?), the general protocol was for dosing recommendations to be extrapolated from adults to children. In other words, there was little to no hard data providing any sort of a basis for how much of a given cough/cold medicine should be administered to children - or if it should be administered at all.

Cough Relief - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Eventually, the FDA figured this out and ruled that cough and cold medicines were inappropriate for children under the age of 2, then extended the ban to children under age 6.

Even the medications still considered appropriate for the 6-plus age group (at least for now) have come under fire, with more than a few product recalls for quality-control issues that resulted in a number of products (cough and cold, allergy, fever) made by several drug manufacturers being removed from the shelves for several months in 2010.

Wouldn't it be great if our kids had something natural to help them get rid of those nasty coughs, or at least minimize their duration? Well, perhaps they do: honey. For example, in a 2007 Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine study involving 105 children ages 2-18 with upper respiratory infections,

children who were given buckwheat honey (between 1/2 and 2 teaspoons prior to bedtime, depending on age) coughed less and slept better than children who did not receive any honey or who received honey-flavored dextromethorphan (the primary active ingredient in many cough and cold medications).

Talk to your doctor for more information, and keep in mind that honey is not recommended for children in their first year because it may contain botulism spores, which can be harmful to young children's underdeveloped immune systems.

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