

[IMAGE]

## Say No to Cold Medicine, Yes to Honey

By Editorial Staff

You've been up half the night with your toddler, who came home from day care with the latest flu bug and can't sleep due to a nasty cough and stuffy nose. You head to your medicine cabinet, which is stocked with all sorts of over-the-counter cough and cold remedies. But which one do you choose? Actually, the answer is *none*.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently issued a public health advisory recommending that over-the-counter cough and cold products not be given to infants and children under 2 years of age because of serious and potentially life-threatening side effects that can occur. In the advisory, the FDA said it "strongly supports the actions taken by many pharmaceutical manufacturers to voluntarily withdraw cough and cold medicines being sold for use with this age group."

Where do you turn when your infant or toddler has the sniffles or a cough? A recent study suggests that a natural alternative commonly found in your kitchen could provide children - and parents - with much-needed relief. The study, published in the *Journal of Pediatrics*, found that parents rated honey most favorably for symptomatic relief of their child's nocturnal cough and sleep difficulty because of a cough due to an upper respiratory tract infection.

One hundred five children ages 2 to 18 years old with upper respiratory tract infections were given either a single dose of buckwheat honey, honey-flavored dextromethorphan (a common ingredient in many over-the-counter cold medications) or no treatment at all 30 minutes prior to bedtime. A dose of honey consistently scored the best while no treatment scored the worst. However, it is important to note that children under two years of age should not be given honey.

If you decide to give an over-the-counter cough or cold medicine to children over the age of 2, the FDA recommends parents follow these guidelines. (By the way, the FDA is debating whether to extend its public health advisory to include children up to age 6.)

- A spoon pouring honey into a bottle shaped like a bear. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark

Check the "active ingredients" section of the drug facts label to help you understand what active

ingredients are in the medicine and what symptoms each ingredient is intended to treat.

- Be careful not to give your child more than one over-the-counter medicine, as they each may have high concentrations of more than one active ingredient, essentially giving your child an overdose of that ingredient. For example, children should not take more than one medicine containing an antihistamine.
- Carefully follow the directions on the "drug facts" portion of the label.
- Only use the measuring spoon or cup that comes with the medicine or those made specially for measuring drugs.
- Choose over-the-counter cough and cold medicines with childproof safety caps and store them out of the reach of children.
- Understand that using over-the-counter cough and cold medicine is only intended to treat your child's symptoms.
- Do not use these products to sedate your child or make them sleepier.
- Call a physician, pharmacist or other health care professional if you have any questions.

But remember, according to the study, a dose of honey just might prove more effective, and you probably won't have to do much convincing to get your child to swallow it. It's not a spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down, but a spoonful of honey just might be the next best thing when dealing with your child's cough.

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