

Cough in Children: Care Instructions

Overview

A cough is how your child's body responds to something that bothers your child's throat or airways. Many things can cause a cough. Your child might cough because of a cold or the flu, bronchitis, or asthma. Cigarette smoke, postnasal drip, allergies, and stomach acid that backs up into the throat also can cause coughs.

A cough is a symptom, not a disease. Most coughs stop when the cause, such as a cold, goes away. You can take a few steps at home to help your child cough less and feel better.

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

How can you care for your child at home?

- Have your child drink plenty of water and other fluids. This may help soothe a dry or sore throat. Honey or lemon juice in hot water or tea may ease a dry cough. Do not give honey to a child younger than 1 year old. It may contain bacteria that are harmful to infants.
- Be careful with cough and cold medicines. Don't give them to children younger than 6, because they don't work for children that age and can even be harmful. For children 6 and older, always follow all the instructions carefully. Make sure you know how much medicine to give and how long to use it. And use the dosing device if one is included.
- Keep your child away from smoke. Do not smoke or let anyone else smoke around your child or in your house.
- Help your child avoid exposure to smoke, dust, or other pollutants, or have your child wear a face mask. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to find out which type of face mask will give your child the most benefit.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think your child may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- Your child has severe trouble breathing. Symptoms may include:
 - Using the belly muscles to breathe.
 - The chest sinking in or the nostrils flaring when your child struggles to breathe.
- Your child's skin and fingernails are gray or blue.
- Your child coughs up large amounts of blood or what looks like coffee grounds.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your child coughs up blood.
- Your child has new or worse trouble breathing.
- Your child has a new or higher fever.

Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your child has a new symptom, such as an earache or a rash.
- Your child coughs more deeply or more often, especially if you notice more mucus or a change in the color of the mucus.
- Your child does not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **Z728** in the search box to learn more about "**Cough in Children: Care Instructions**".

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