Treat with care

Kids and OTC Cough and Cold Medicines

OTCsafety.org
Do you know which medicines to give your child, when to use them, and how to use them safely?

As a parent or caregiver, you are in charge of your child’s health. This is a big responsibility, but it doesn’t have to be a difficult one. Many rely on oral over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medicines to help children feel better when they are sick, and it is important that parents and caregivers know how to give these medicines to children safely.

Special attention should always be used when giving children any medicine. Remember that OTC medicines, like all medicines, are serious medications and need to be used carefully. This brochure will provide you with the information you need to safely help your child feel better when he or she is sick with a cough or cold. Remember, when giving medicines to young children, you should always treat with care and talk to a doctor or healthcare professional if you have any questions.

Important tips to remember when giving your child oral OTC cough and cold medicines:

- Always read and follow medicine labels exactly and use the measuring device that comes with the medicine.
- Do not give a medicine only intended for adults to your child.
- Only give the medicine that treats your child’s specific symptoms.
- Never give two medicines at the same time that contain the same active ingredient.
- Do not use oral cough and cold medicines for children under age 4.
- Never use an OTC medicine to sedate or make your child sleepy.
- Never give aspirin-containing products to your child for cold or flu symptoms unless told to do so by a doctor.
- If your child develops any side effects or reactions that concern you, stop giving the OTC medicine and contact a doctor immediately.
- Keep all medicines out of your child’s reach and sight.
- Talk to a doctor, pharmacist, or other healthcare provider if you have any questions.
Drug Facts

Active ingredients (in each 5 mL, 1 teaspoon) Purpose
Dextromethorphan HBr, USP, 5mg Cough suppressant
Phenylephrine HCl, USP, 2.5 mg Nasal decongestant

Uses temporarily relieves:
• nasal and sinus congestion
• cough due to minor throat and bronchial irritation

Warnings
Do not use in a child who is taking a prescription monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) (certain drugs for depression, psychiatric or emotional conditions, or Parkinson’s disease), or for 2 weeks after stopping the MAOI drug. If you do not know if the child’s prescription drug contains an MAOI, ask a doctor or pharmacist before giving this product.

Ask a doctor before use if the child has
• heart disease
• thyroid disease
• high blood pressure
• diabetes
• if cough is accompanied by too much phlegm (mucus)

When using this product
• do not exceed recommended dosage

Stop use and ask a doctor if
• nervousness, dizziness or sleeplessness occurs
• symptoms do not improve within 7 days or occur with a fever
• cough persists for more than 7 days, comes back or occurs with a fever, rash or persistent headache. These could be signs of a serious condition

Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a poison control center right away.

Directions
• take every 4 hours; not to exceed 6 doses in 24 hours or as directed by a doctor
children 6 to under 12 years or age 2 teaspoons
children 4 to under 6 years of age 1 teaspoon
children under 4 years of age Do not use

Other information
• each tablespoon contains sodium 2 mg
• contains no aspirin
• store at controlled room temperature 20-25°C (68-77°F)

Inactive ingredients
• sucrose, citric acid, citric acid, ascorbic acid, FD&C Red 40, flavors, maltitol solution, propylene glycol, purified water, sodium citrate

Active Ingredient
This section lists the ingredient or ingredients that make the medicine work. It is very important to pay attention to this section if you are taking more than one medicine—whether OTC or prescription—to make sure you are not taking too much of the same active ingredient.

Purpose
This section tells you what type—or category—of medicine it is, such as a cough suppressant or nasal decongestant.

Uses
This section tells you what symptoms or illnesses you can expect the medicine to treat. You should only use products that treat your child’s symptoms.

Warnings
There are times when you should not take a particular medicine. The warnings section explains these times, and also tells you when to talk to a doctor or other healthcare professional, as well as when to stop taking a medicine. This section also reminds parents and other caregivers to keep medicine out of the reach of children and to never use these medicines to sedate or make your child sleepy.
5 Directions
This section tells you exactly how and when to take a medicine. Always read and follow the directions exactly and use the measuring or dosing device that comes with liquid medications. Do not use children's oral cough and cold medicines in children under age 4 and never give more than the label says. If you have any questions, talk to your child's doctor before giving a medicine to your child.

6 Other Information
This section tells you other important information you should know about a medicine, such as where to store it. You should always keep medications out of the reach and sight of children.

7 Inactive Ingredients
The inactive ingredients lists other ingredients in the medicine such as colors and flavoring and is important especially if your child has a known allergy.
Follow the Dosing Directions on the Label
You should never guess about dosing amounts—especially when giving medicines to children. Every medicine has dosing directions on its label, and those directions— including the amount of medicine to give, when to give it, and when not to give it—should be followed exactly. If a medicine does not include a dose for your child’s age or specifically says DO NOT USE, do not give that medicine to your child. Instead, call your doctor for advice about the best treatment options for your child.

Use the Right Dosing or Measuring Device
The Drug Facts label will state the correct dose of medicine. Dosing instructions found on the label are not recommendations but specific instructions about the exact amount that you should use to treat your child’s symptoms. It is important to always follow the dosing directions on the Drug Facts label and, for liquid medicines, to use the dosing or measuring device that comes with the medicines. Do not use common kitchen spoons to measure as they are not meant for measuring medicines.

Pay Attention to Active Ingredients
To avoid giving too much of the same medicine, you should always pay close attention to the “active ingredient,” especially if you need to give your child more than one medication at a time. Many medications—both prescription and OTC—can contain the same active ingredients. Giving two medicines with the same active ingredients may cause harm if a child is given too much of a particular medicine. Always double check the active ingredient and if you are confused or have questions, make sure to speak to a doctor or healthcare professional before giving the medicine to your child.

Never Use OTC Medicines to Make a Child Sleepy
Like all medicines, OTC medicines are real medicines that should be taken seriously and only used to treat a child’s specific symptoms. OTC medications should never be used with the intention of sedating your child or making your child sleepy and can cause harm if used in this manner. Never give an OTC medicine to make your child sleepy.
Store All Medicines Safely

Knowing how to safely give medicines to your child is important. But, the safekeeping of medicines plays an important role, too. Statistics show that a majority of emergency department visits from medicines are due to young children getting into cough and cold medicines out of their parents’ watch. Safeguard your home by keeping all medicines stored safely away from children’s reach and sight and always avoid telling your child that medicine tastes “like candy.”

Talk to Your Doctor

Giving medicine to your child is part of nearly every parent’s job at some point, but you don’t have to do it alone. Knowing how to match your child’s symptoms to the medicine and following the directions are important. You should always, however, talk to a doctor, pharmacist, or other healthcare professional if you have any questions.

Want more information?

OTCsafety.org, the web site of the CHPA Educational Foundation, has up-to-date information to help families understand the safe and appropriate use of over-the-counter medicines.

Visit OTCsafety.org for more information on how you can help your child feel better when he or she is sick with a cough or cold. While you are there, sign up for the OTCsafety.org e-mail list to receive important updates and information.

About the CHPA Educational Foundation

The CHPA Educational Foundation is the nonprofit foundation of the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, and is dedicated to providing education to consumers on the appropriate and safe use of over-the-counter medicines and nutritional supplements.

The foundation’s online home is OTCsafety.org.
This educational brochure is brought to you by the leading makers of over-the-counter cough and cold medicines and is for informational purposes only. For specific questions, please contact your child’s doctor.