

COUGH

Coughing is almost always an indication of an irritation in your child's air passages. Coughs are usually associated with respiratory illnesses such as colds, croup, flu, or pneumonia. Allergies, inhaled irritants (such as tobacco smoke), or accidentally inhaled objects are less common causes of cough.

HOME TREATMENT OF COUGHS

Coughs **do** serve a purpose, and treatment is not always necessary. Please feel free to try the following suggestions on your own for persistent or bothersome coughs, especially if sleep is disturbed. Be realistic. No treatment is designed to completely take away a cough, only to make it more bearable until the irritation in the airways is gone. In the case of viral infections, this can be a week or more.

- Add moisture to the airways by giving your child extra fluids during the day and using a cool-mist humidifier at night. Be sure to clean the humidifier with detergent and water each morning.
- For milder coughs during waking hours, consider using a cough drop for a child over 4 years old, or 1 or 2 tsp. of corn syrup for younger children.
- For coughs that interfere with school or sleep, use a cough medicine with Dextromethorphan, such as Pediacare Cough/Cold drops or syrup or Triaminic DM. These medications are available over-the-counter and the dosages are the same as for Tylenol drops or syrup (**see chart at back of book**). There are a bewildering variety of cough medicines available. Try to avoid jumping from one to another; in many cases the active ingredients are the same! Find one brand that you trust and your child tolerates well and stick with it.
- Give warm fluids for coughing spasms (warm apple juice, herbal teas, or chicken broth), which will relax the airways and loosen phlegm.
- If the cough sounds like a seal barking and is accompanied by hoarseness (croup), a humidifier is especially important. Taking your child into a bathroom made steamy by turning on the hot shower or bringing your child outside in the cool air may help coughing attacks.

WHEN TO CALL

Please call us promptly if your child:

- Experiences difficulty breathing (struggling for each breath, or unable to speak or cry because of a breathing problem). In an infant, make sure the difficulty isn't relieved by simply clearing the nose. -Develops bluish lips. -Has a fever greater than 105 degrees (100.4 degrees if your child is under 3 months).
- Has choked on a small object that could be caught in the throat.

Please call us during office hours if your child:

- Also has a fever that has been present more than 72 hours.
- Is less than 1 month of age and has a persistent cough.
- Has chest discomfort, even when not coughing.
- Has blood-tinged sputum.
- Fails to start improving within one week.
- Has the hoarse, raspy cough of croup and has episodes of disrupted sleep due to spasms of coughing or breathing problems. If breathing problems are severe and do not improve with the home treatment for croup within 20 minutes, call right away.