

How to Care for Your Child with a Cough

This leaflet will provide you with information about coughs, their causes, treatment and home care advice.



What is a Cough?

- A cough is your child's body's way of reacting when something irritates his/her airway.
- During a cough, your child's chest and abdomen push air out of the lungs to get rid of the irritant.
- Most coughs are caused by upper respiratory infections like the common cold.
- Most coughs go away on their own within 3 weeks and don't need any treatments.

What are the causes of Cough?

The common causes of cough include:

- Cold or flu due to different respiratory viruses.
- Asthma and allergies.
- Lung infections caused by viruses or bacteria.
- Croup (barking cough), which is caused by a virus that makes the airway swell.
- Pertussis (whooping cough), which is caused by a certain type of bacteria. Pertussis can be prevented with the pertussis vaccine.

Home care advice:

If your child has a cough, regardless of the cause, here are a few tips you can try at home to help you care for your child:

- **Avoid cough suppressants for children under 6 years old**, as they can often do more harm than good.
- **Increase fluid intake:** This can help relieve a sore throat and moisten the mucus in your child's lungs, making it easier for your child to cough it out.
- **Rest in bed in an upright position:** This will help your child regain their health as chest congestion may make it difficult to sleep.
- **Elevate the head of the bed:** This is especially helpful for infants. For older children, putting a few pillows under the mattress can help them sleep and breathe more comfortably.
- **Add some humidity:** A warm bath or shower can help ease your child's breathing, and a cool-mist humidifier in the bedroom overnight can also help.
- **Eliminate irritants:** These can include chemicals, cigarette smoke, dust, or allergens.

Home remedies for coughs for children younger than 6 years:

- **Children aged 3 months to 1 year old:**
 - o Hydration is the best home treatment for a cough. Continue to give your baby breast milk or formula.
 - o If your baby is having trouble feeding due to a cough, breathing, or congestion issues, try giving smaller amounts more frequently or using a syringe or spoon.
 - o Avoid giving honey to infants under 1 year old, as it can cause a serious disease called infantile botulism.
- **Children aged 1 to 6 years old:**
 - o You can give your child 2.5ml to 5ml of honey as needed. Offer it on its own or stir it into warm water. It will help soothe a sore throat, thin the mucus, and relieve the cough.

When should I seek medical advice or take my child to the Emergency Department?

Seek medical advice or take your child to the Emergency Department in the following cases:

- If your child is younger than 3 months old and he/she is coughing.
- High fever.
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- Decreased oral intake by less than 75% of usual, or frequent vomiting.
- Ceasing of breath in babies and young infants.
- Bluish discoloration around the mouth in babies and young infants.
- Violent coughs sometimes followed by a high-pitched intake of breath that sounds like a whoop.
- Decreased activity and general tiredness.

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