



Cold Shoulder to Cold Medicines

Following warnings from the U.S. Food and Drug

Administration (FDA) and other federal agencies about the safety of over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold products for children, leading drug companies voluntarily withdrew 14 infant oral medicines in October. Questions have been raised about the safety of these products and whether the benefits justify the potential risks they pose, especially in children younger than 2 years of age. The move does not apply to medicines intended for children older than 2.

An OTC cough and cold medicine can be harmful if a child is given more than the recommended amount, given the medicine too often, or given more than one cough and cold medicine containing the same active ingredient. To avoid giving a child too much medicine, parents should carefully follow the directions and read the "Drug Facts" box on the package label.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, several studies indicate that these products are not effective in children younger than 6 and can have potentially serious side effects, even when given as directed. Further, dosage guidelines for cold and cold mixtures are based on adult data and thus may be inaccurate for children.

The following are a few things parents should know about using cough and cold products. (For a complete list, visit www.aap.org/new/kidcolds.htm)

The infant cough and cold medicines that have been withdrawn are:

- Dimetapp Decongestant Plus Cough Infant Drops
- Dimetapp Decongestant Infant Drops
- Little Colds Decongestant Plus Cough
- Little Colds Multi-Symptom Cold Formula
- Pediacare Infant Drops Decongestant (containing pseudoephedrine)
- Pediacare Infant Drops Decongestant & Cough (containing pseudoephedrine)
- Pediacare Infant Dropper Decongestant (containing phenylephrine)
- Pediacare Infant Dropper Long-Acting Cough
- Pediacare Infant Dropper Decongestant & Cough (containing phenylephrine)
- Robitussin Infant Cough DM Drops
- Triaminic Infant & Toddler Thin Strips Decongestant
- Triaminic Infant & Toddler Thin Strips® Decongestant Plus Cough
- Tylenol Concentrated Infants' Drops Plus Cold
- Tylenol Concentrated Infants' Drops Plus Cold & Cough

- Do not give cough and cold products to children younger than 2 years old unless your healthcare provider specifically directs you to.
- Do not give children medicine that is packaged and made for adults. Use only products marked for use in babies, infants or children (sometimes labelled "for pediatric use").
- If your child is taking other OTC or prescription medicines, make sure your healthcare provider reviews and approves their combined use.
- Read and follow the directions in the "Drug Facts" box. Do not give a child medicine more often or in greater amounts than is stated on the package. Be sure you know the active ingredients and warnings.
- For liquid products, use the measuring device (dropper, dosing cup, or dosing spoon) that is packaged with each different medicine and is marked to deliver the recommended dose. A kitchen teaspoon or tablespoon is NOT an appropriate measuring device for giving medicines to children.
- If a child's condition worsens or does not improve, stop using the product and immediately take the child to a healthcare provider for evaluation.

New Nasal Flu Vaccine for Toddlers

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved expanded use of the nasal influenza vaccine FluMist in healthy people between the ages of 2 and 49 who are not pregnant.

Previously the vaccine, which is sprayed in the nose, was limited to healthy children 5 years of age and older and to adults up to age 49.

"The goal of preventing influenza is now more attainable with the availability of FluMist for younger children," said Jesse L. Goodman, M.D., director, FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research. "This approval also offers parents and health professionals a needle-free option for squeamish toddlers, who may be reluctant to get a traditional influenza shot."

FluMist should not be administered to anyone with asthma or to children younger than age of 5 years who experience recurrent wheezing because of the potential for increased wheezing after receiving the vaccine. Children allergic to any of FluMist's components, including eggs or egg products, should also not receive the vaccine.



Youth Suicide Rates Increase

The suicide rate among young people ages 10 to 24 rose 8 percent from 2003 to 2004, marking the largest single-year increase in more than 15 years, according to a report recently released in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR).

During the 12-month period, suicide rates rose from 6.78 to 7.32 per 100,000. This increase follows a decline of more than 28 percent between 1990 and 2003, when rates fell from 9.48 to 6.78, the report stated.

"We don't yet know if this is a short-lived increase or if it's the beginning of a trend," said Ileana Arias, M.D., director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Either way, it's a harsh reminder that suicide and suicide attempts are affecting too many youth and young adults. We need to make sure suicide prevention efforts are continuous and reaching children and young adults."

The analysis also found that changes had taken place in the methods used to attempt suicide. In 1990, firearms were the most common method for both girls and boys. In 2004, however, hanging/suffocation was the most common suicide method among girls, accounting for 71.4 percent of suicides among 10- to 14-year-old girls and 49 percent among 15- to 19-year-old young women. From 2003 to 2004, there was a 119 percent increase in hanging/suffocation suicides among 10- to 14-year-old girls. For boys and young men, firearms are still the most common method.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/Suicide/youthsuicide.htm or www.cdc.gov/injury. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline also provides resources for preventing suicide. Call 800-273-8255.

Flu Fight

Influenza is responsible for about 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations in the United States each year. In addition, the disease results in more than \$87 billion of U.S. economic burden annually.

During the 2005–06 flu season, only one in five children ages 6 months to 23 months were fully vaccinated, and little more than one in 10 children needing two doses received both. Flu vaccine coverage varied widely among states, but no state had more than 40 percent of children fully vaccinated.

Alarmed at low influenza vaccination rates in both adults and children, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID), and other leading health organizations are increasing their efforts to urge Americans to be immunized against the flu this winter.

The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that all children ages 6 months to 59 months receive a vaccination to protect against the contagious respiratory infection. Studies have shown that children younger than 5 years were hospitalized for flu-related reasons

at rates similar to those for people ages 50 to 64. This emphasizes the need for improved flu prevention efforts for America's youngest generation.

While the CDC also recommends an annual flu vaccination for almost everyone who desires protection from influenza, it's especially important for high-risk populations. High-risk groups include pregnant women, schoolchildren, people with chronic medical conditions, people older than 50, health care professionals, and all others in close contact with these high-risk populations. This is particularly important for those in contact with infants younger than 6 months, who are too young to receive influenza vaccine, and includes parents, grandparents, siblings, and child care providers.

"Not only does annual influenza vaccination help protect yourself, it also helps create a 'cocoon of protection' for those around you," said William Schaffner, M.D., vice president of the NFID. "Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza from infecting yourself and others, including family, friends, schoolchildren, and co-workers — and is the right thing to do for your community this and every influenza season."