

WHAT TO TAKE FOR A COUGH?

First understand that nothing will kill the cold virus, so use of cold medicine is simply to make your child feel better by controlling the symptoms. Most coughs are due to mucus running down the back of the nasal cavity and down towards the lungs. By coughing their body prevent mucus and other harmful stuff from getting into the lungs and causing pneumonia. So if we could stop the mucus, we'd be on to something. Decongestants (Pseudoephedrine) try to do this. The problem with decongestants is they are a form of adrenaline, so they make keep your child from sleeping. That's why I like antihistamines (Diphenhydramine, Brompheniramine, Chlorpheniramine) which may induce drowsiness and well as dry up secretion. They usually package these as "Cold and Allergy". Any brand will work- Dimetapp, Triaminic, Pediacare. They are dosed as ½ teaspoon/20 lbs every 6 hours. In some cities you may need to ask the pharmacist for the decongestant (or show ID) due to their misuse in making Methamphetamines.

Most other medicines- like expectorants (guaifenesin) and cough suppressants (dextromethorphan and codeine) has been shown not to work. Even if the cough suppressant did work, then your child would not cough up the mucus and would be set up for pneumonia. In addition one of the side effect of codeine is respiratory depression, the last thing you want when you child is sick is to further inhibit their breathing.

Cool mist humidifiers, normal saline in the nose, elevating the head of the bed all help. Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Motrin (ibuprofen) is fine for the fever and can be taken with the cold medicine provided there is no fever reducer in it already.

Do you have to use anything? NO! If you try something and you do not see results (By results I mean decreased symptoms and a happier child) do not feel obligated to continue the cold medicine. TLC, fluids to prevent dehydration and time are the only true remedies.