



Drug FAQs for Members

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Cough & Cold Medications and Children

In January 2008, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) asked parents to stop giving over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medicines to their infants and children less than 2 years old. The FDA warned parents that cough and cold medications can cause serious and even life-threatening side effects in kids less than 2. These medicines are used to treat symptoms of colds, like a cough or stuffy or runny nose (e.g., “sniffles”). Last fall an expert panel advised the FDA that OTC cough and cold medicines should not be used in children under 6 years of age, because there is little proof that they work or are safe in young children. In October 2007, the makers of several OTC infant cough and cold medicines voluntarily took their products off the market. They did this because of safety concerns when these medicines are used in children younger than 2 years old. The FDA is expected to make a decision this spring on the use of OTC cough and cold medicines in 2 to 11 year-olds.

Which OTC infant cough and cold medicines were taken off the market?

The medicines that were taken off the market were combination products intended for use in infants. They contain one or more ingredients that help with allergies (i.e., chlorpheniramine, diphenhydramine, brompheniramine), stuffy nose (i.e., pseudoephedrine, phenylephrine) or cough (i.e., dextromethorphan).

Dimetapp - Decongestant Plus Cough Infant Drops - Decongestant Infant Drops	Robitussin - Infant Cough and Cold CF - Infant Cough DM Drops
Little Colds - Decongestant Plus Cough - Multi-Symptom Cold Formula	Triaminic - Infant & Toddler Thin Strips Decongestant - Infant & Toddler Thin Strips Decongestant Plus Cough
Pediacare - Infant Drops Decongestant - Infant Drops Decongestant Cough - Infant Dropper Decongestant* - Infant Dropper Long-Acting Cough* - Infant Dropper Decongestant & Cough*	Tylenol - Concentrated Infants' Drops Plus Cold* - Concentrated Infants' Drops Plus Cold & Cough*

* These products were stocked at Kaiser Permanente pharmacies but were removed from shelves on 10/11/07

Why were these medicines taken off the market?

- There has been growing concern that OTC cough and cold medicines may not be safe in young children. There have been reports of accidental overdoses and even death, mostly in children under 2 years of age when these products have been misused (i.e., giving too often or too much). In addition, there is little proof from medical studies to show that these medicines work in young children.
- In August 2007, the FDA issued a Public Health Advisory which cautioned that cough and cold products not be used in children under 2 years of age unless specifically directed by a health care provider.

What can I do if my child who is less than 6 years old has a cold?

- Make sure that your child gets plenty of rest and fluids.
- Gently use a rubber suction bulb to clean your child's clogged nose.
 - Saline nose drops (e.g., Ocean nasal spray) can be used to soften secretions before using the suction bulb.
- Use a cool mist humidifier in your child's room – be sure to clean and dry the humidifier regularly.
- Single-ingredient medicines, such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) and ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin), are still available. As recommended by your physician, these medicines can be used to help relieve pain or fever. Check that these

medicines do not contain extra cough or cold ingredients.

- Talk to your physician about other ways to help treat your child's cold symptoms. You can also find information in your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise® Handbook or go online to the Kaiser Permanente website (members.kp.org).

What should parents of children aged 2 to 11 know about using OTC cough and cold products?^{9,10}

- The FDA is planning to make a recommendation this spring on the use of OTC cough and cold medications in this age group.
- Until the FDA finishes their review, the FDA has the following recommendations for parents who choose to use these medications in kids aged 2 to 11:
 - Always read and follow the dosing directions on the label of any OTC medication.
 - Understand that these drugs will NOT cure or shorten the duration of the common cold.
 - Check the "Drug Facts" label to learn what active ingredients are in the products because many of the OTC cough and cold products contain several active ingredients.
 - Be careful if giving more than one OTC cough and cold medicine to a child. If you give two medicines that have the same or similar ingredients, a child could receive too much of an ingredient which may be harmful.
 - Only use measuring spoons or cups that come with the medicine or those made especially for measuring drugs.
 - Choosing OTC cough and cold medicines with childproof safety caps, when available, and store the medicines out of the reach of children.
 - Never use a cough or cold remedy to sedate or make your child sleepy.
 - Call a physician, pharmacist or other health care provider if you have any questions about using cough or cold medications in children 2 years of age and older.