

I have talked about this before, but the issue has surfaced once again and I felt it was important to repeat myself. In January the FDA issued an advisory stating that over-the-counter cough and cold medicines should not be given to infants and children under the age of 2. They are also not sure that they are safe for children older than 2 and are currently studying the issue.

Each year approximately 7,000 children are admitted to hospital emergency rooms to be treated for problems related to cold and flu remedies. That represents approximately 6% of all cases of emergency room visits related to adverse effects from medication.

One of the primary reasons this is such an issue, is that we are exposing our children to these risks for nothing. These remedies have been shown to have no benefit in reducing the severity of a cold or flu or reducing the duration. In fact, it has been shown that a glass of water has the same benefit as a cough suppressant.

In addition to not providing any real benefit, these remedies can suppress the body's efforts to combat the illness. Coughing for instance is used by the body to eliminate debris from the airways in the lungs. Likewise, sneezing helps remove unwanted substances from the nasal passages. Mucus helps to trap germs and has anti-microbial properties.

Probably the most important tool that the body uses to fight illness is fever. A fever is not produced by a virus or other germ, it is produced by the body in order to assist the immune system in eliminating the germ from the body. Fevers speed the healing process and except for infants, they haven't been shown to damage the body. Fevers don't cook the brain like some people believe. By taking medicine to reduce a fever, we actually are doing the germs a favor and we make it easier for them to continue to multiply in our bodies.

Next time you or your children come down with a cold or flu, you might want to forgo the medicine and stick with non-sugar fluids, chicken soup and rest.

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