

What? That's not what we said: Real Simple Magazine

✖ Take a look at the February 2011 issue of *Real Simple* magazine. We are two of the experts cited on page 124. The good news is that some of our thoughts on the essentials of a medicine cabinet were integrated into a photo-essay piece. The bad news is that children's cough medicine is listed as a component of the medical cabinet. While the other contributors to the piece may encourage use of over-the-counter cold and cough medications, we discourage use.

Of concern, safety and effectiveness of cough and cold medicine has never been fully demonstrated in children. In fact, in 2007 an advisory panel including American Academy of Pediatrics physicians, Poison Control representatives, and Baltimore Department of Public Health representatives recommended to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to stop use of cold and cough medications under six years of age.

Thousands of children under twelve years of age go to emergency rooms each year after over dosing on cough and cold medicines according to a 2008 study in *Pediatrics*. Having these medicines around the house increases the chances of accidental overdosing. Cold medications do not kill germs and will not help your child get better faster. Between 1985 and 2007, six studies showed cold medications didn't have significant effect over placebo.

So why are children's cough and cold medicines still around? A year after the advisory panel published their recommendations, FDA advised against using these medications in children younger than two years but data about these medications in older children is still rolling in. FDA continues to advise caution with these medications. The producers of cold medicines said at that point they would

launch new studies on the safety of medication for those two to twelve years of age. In the meantime pharmaceutical companies stopped manufacturing cold medicine products for those under two years of age and changed the labels to read “for four years old and above.”

Yes, watching your child suffer from a cold is tough. But why give something that doesn't help her get better and has potential side effects? There is plenty to do besides reach for cold medicine. Give honey for her cough if she is over one year of age. Run a cool mist humidifier in her bedroom, use saline nose spray or washes, have her take a shower with you, and teach her how to blow her nose. Break up that mucous by hydrating her well- give her a bit more than she normally drinks.

If you have young children and want to make your medicine cabinet truly “real simple” then take out the over the counter cough and cold medication.

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