

What you can do for kids instead of cold meds

by Andy Dworkin, The Oregonian

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Two quick facts explain why kids shouldn't use over-the-counter cold medicine: Hundreds of infants and toddlers wind up in the emergency room with overdoses each year. And a study found a spoonful of honey was better than cough syrup at helping kids over age 1 stop coughing and go to sleep. (Children under 1 risk getting botulism if they eat honey.)

"It comes down to our most basic premise as physicians, which is, 'First do no harm,'" Dr. Megan Neuman, a [Legacy Emanuel Children's Hospital](#) pediatrician.

Neuman says children smaller than adult-size should not be given over-the-counter cough and cold medicines.

Fortunately, several safe home remedies can help children feel better. Naturopathic doctor Jill Stanard and Chinese medicine doctor Xiaoli Chen of the [National College of Natural Medicine](#) joined Neuman in offering some tips:

From nasal drip to fevers, colds sap fluids. So give your kids **plenty to drink**. Neuman says any fluid children like is fine. Chen recommends soups made with ginger or Chinese yam. Stanard recommends chicken soup and "clear" juices, such as apple juice, but advises against mucous-promoting orange juice.

Noncaffeinated teas, such as ginger or sage herb teas, are great. Chinese medicines fight colds with herbs including mulberry leaf and chrysanthemum flower, in teas or pills.

Humidifiers moisten sore throats and help break up mucous.

Lozenges can soothe throats in older kids, who won't choke on them. Stanard prefers lozenges with zinc. Older children can ease a sore throat by gargling salt water.

Rinse stuffy noses with saline drops or a neti pot. You can clear younger children's noses with suction bulbs.

Don't worry about **fevers** lower than 103 degrees; they actually help fight infections. But if a fever makes your child uncomfortable, you can give pediatric doses of acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Never give children aspirin.

Feed a cold, if your child wants something to eat. But don't worry if a child's not hungry, as long as he's drinking plenty.

Call a doctor if your child's fever lasts longer than five days or hits 103 degrees, or if other cold symptoms (such as a cough) last longer than two weeks.

Free clinics

Kids and their parents can get advice about cold and flu risks and tips for staying healthy.

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 15. For an appointment, call:

•Naturopathic medicine clinic, 2220 S. W. First Ave., 503-552-1551
•Chinese medicine clinic, 2232 N. W. Pettygrove St., 503-552-1552