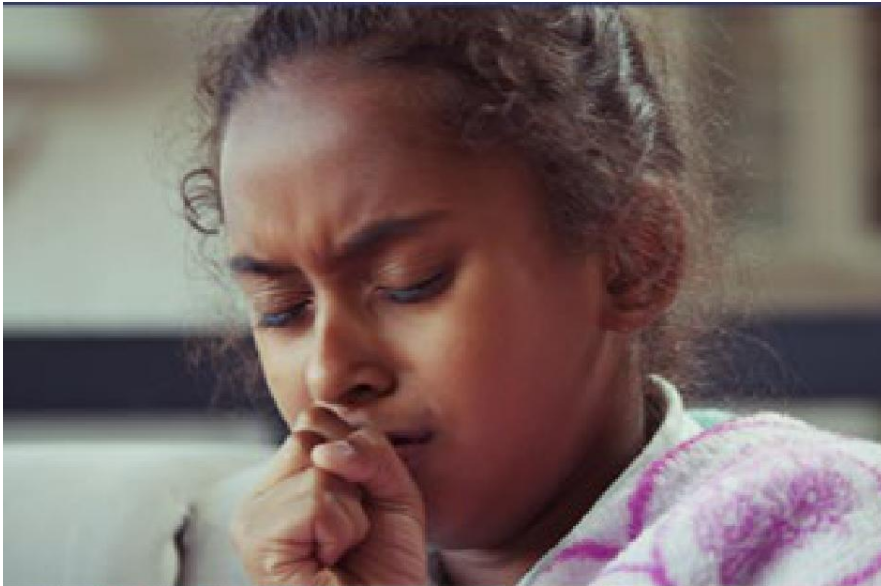




Cough in Children



Overview

It's hard to listen to your child cough. It's a constant reminder that something's wrong, and you want to help them get relief. Let's take a few minutes to learn more about coughing.

Why do we cough?

First, why do we cough? Well, it's the body's way of clearing the respiratory tract. It helps get mucus out of the lungs. It can help clear infections and irritants, too. So keep in mind that some coughing is OK.

Acute cough

When a child has a cough that lasts for no more than a few weeks, we say it's an "acute" cough. These often result from a common cold or some other infection of the upper respiratory tract.

Chronic cough

If a cough lasts longer than two weeks, we say it's a "chronic" cough. Many things can cause a chronic cough. Asthma, allergies, esophageal reflux and sinus infections can cause it. So can a lung infection or exposure to secondhand smoke or other irritants. Your child may have a chronic cough after inhaling an object or debris. They could even develop a chronic cough that has no clear cause. We call this a "habit" cough.

Treatment

So, what should you do about your child's cough? For acute coughs, only give your child an over-the-counter medication if your child's doctor recommends it. Always talk to your child's doctor first, and follow the medication's directions. A humidifier may help, too. Treatment for chronic coughs depends on the underlying cause. Contact your child's doctor to find out more.