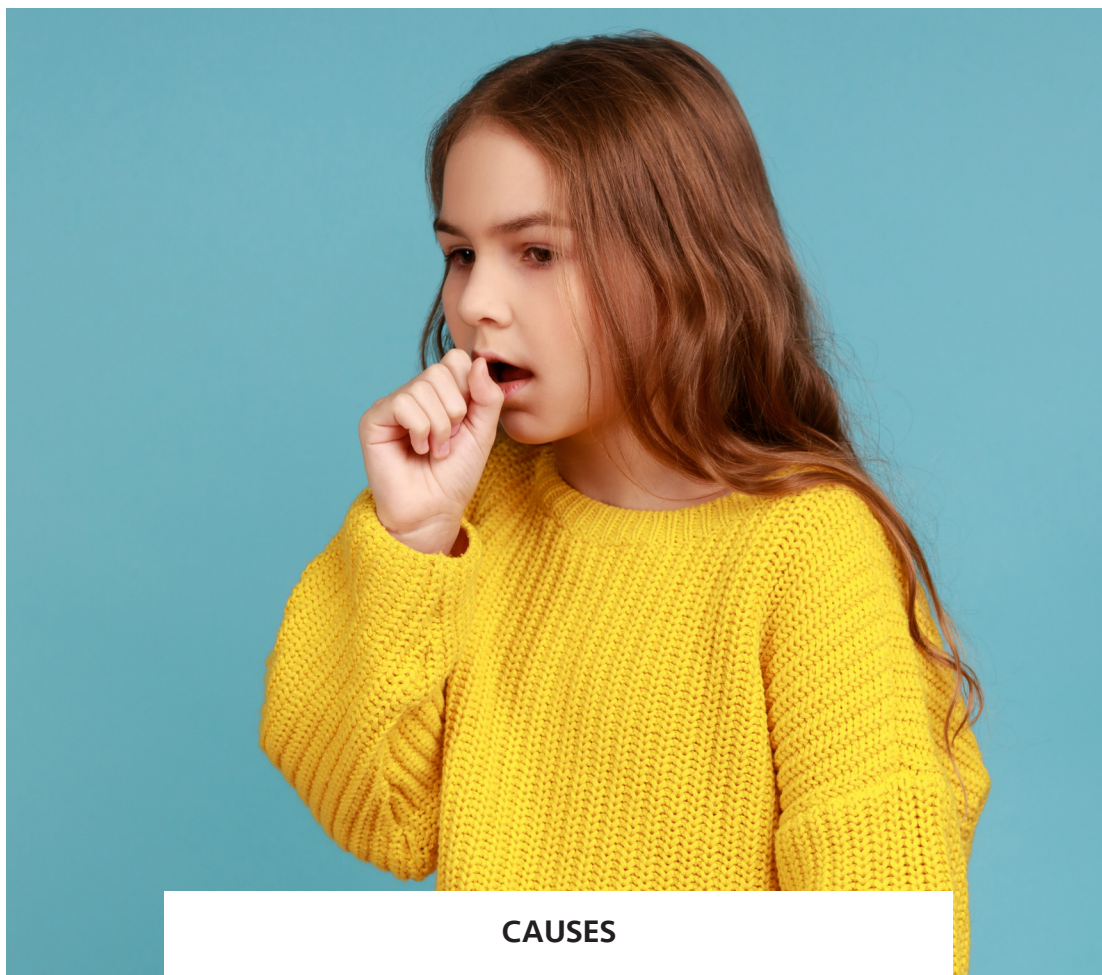




Coughs in children

Coughing can be a sign of many problems. Your child's body uses coughing to clear the lungs and airways.



CAUSES

Coughing itself is not the problem. What causes the cough is the problem.

Children usually get coughs from an infection in the nose and throat.

Here are some other reasons for your child to cough:

- Asthma
- Bronchitis. This is a respiratory tract infection.
- A cold or the flu
- Croup
- Measles
- Smoking or secondhand smoke
- Swollen adenoids. (This can lead to an infection.)
- Whooping cough. A vaccine for this is part of the DTaP shot.

How to treat a cough depends on what kind it is, what caused it, and the other symptoms. Treat the cause and make the pain better.



TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Does your child have any of these problems with the cough?

- Blue color around the lips or fingernails
- Very bad wheezing
- Has a very hard time breathing
- Won't drink anything
- Acts very sleepy or sluggish
- Can't talk, make sounds, or swallow
- Coughs up blood
- The cough lasts after choking on food or other object.

NO **YES** ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE: CALL 911**



With a cough and a hard time breathing, is your child doing these things?

- Drooling
- Breathing through the mouth
- Sticking the chin out
- Gasping for air

NO **YES** ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



Did the cough start suddenly and last an hour or more without stopping?

NO **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



With the cough, does your child have any of these problems?

- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath at rest
- Quick breathing
- Fever
- The cough sounds like a seal's bark.
- Throws up

NO **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**

CONTINUE IN NEXT COLUMN



Did your child miss having his or her DTaP shots? Does he or she have a fever and cough mostly at night?

NO **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Does your child cough up thick green, yellow, or rust-colored mucus?

NO **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Does your child have a cough and is he or she less than 3 months old?

NO **YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Does your child have a rash? Has he or she been near someone with measles?

NO **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



Has the cough lasted more than 2 weeks without getting better?

NO **YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE

- Give your child plenty of liquids, like water and clear soup. These help loosen mucus and soothe a sore throat. Fruit juices are good, but avoid soda or orange juice.
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer, especially in the bedroom. Use distilled (not tap) water. Put a humidifier on the furnace. Keep them very clean. Remember to change the filter on the humidifier.
- Sit with your child in the bathroom with the shower running. The steam can help thin the mucus. (If your child has asthma, do not follow this tip.)
- Raise your child's head when resting if he or she has a cold or respiratory infection.
- Put your child's head lower than his or her chest if the infection is in the lungs.
- Have your child suck on cough drops, hard candies, or suckers. Give suckers that have safety loops instead of hard sticks. (Don't give these to a child under 4 years old.)
- If your baby coughs after eating:
 - Have your baby sit up when he or she eats.
 - If your baby drinks from a bottle, burp your baby after each ounce of formula. Burp the baby every few minutes when breastfeeding.
 - Don't lie the baby down after feeding.
- Ask your child's doctor or pharmacist what kind of cough medicine is OK to give your child.
- Don't smoke. Keep your child away from secondhand smoke. Tell your child not to smoke.
- Keep your child away from chemical gases that can hurt their lungs.
- When your child is better, promote exercise on a regular basis. Your child's breathing muscles will get stronger. Your child will fight infection better, too.
- Keep your child's shots up to date.
- For fever and aches, give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Make sure you give the right kind and dose for your child's weight. (**Note:** Do not give aspirin. Aspirin and other medicines that have salicylates have been linked to Reye's Syndrome.)
- Do not use cough medicines for any children under 6 years old.
- If your child gets bronchitis easily, keep him or her away from air pollution as much as you can. Use air conditioning and air filters. Have your child wear a filter mask over his or her nose and mouth if needed. Keep your child inside when air pollution is heavy.
- Call the doctor if your child doesn't get better in 24 hours.



PREVENT COUGH & CHOKING FROM SOMETHING CAUGHT IN THE THROAT OR WINDPIPE

- Keep coins, paper clips, balloons, and small toy parts out of the reach of babies and small children. Anything that is small enough to fit through the center of a paper towel roll is a choking hazard for babies and small children.
- Watch your child when they eat. For a child less than 4 years old, give soft, cut-up foods. **DON'T** give foods in the list below to a child less than 4 years old.
 - Peanuts and other nuts
 - Popcorn
 - Hot dogs (even when cut in round pieces)
 - Raisins and other dried fruit
 - Raw carrots, celery, apples, and pears
 - Chewing gum
 - Peanut butter from a spoon
 - Hard candy, sunflower or pumpkin seeds, and watermelon with seeds