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From the desk of the Nurse Consultants

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS URGES CAUTION IN USE OF OVER-THE-COUNTER COUGH AND COLD MEDICINES

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today issued an advisory strongly recommending that over-the-counter cough and cold medications not be given to infants and children under two years old because of the risk of life-threatening side effects.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports this recommendation and urges parents to seek safer ways to soothe infants and young children suffering from colds and coughs.

- ◆ Studies have shown cough and cold products are ineffective in treating symptoms of children under six years old, and may pose serious risks.
- ◆ A variety of serious health problems have been associated with use of these medications in children, including death, convulsions, rapid heart rates and decreased levels of consciousness. (A review by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of national emergency department visits due to adverse drug events from cough and cold medications will be published in the online version of Pediatrics Jan. 28.)

- ◆ It is important for parents to receive clear information about the risks and lack of benefit from these drugs.,
- ◆ Children metabolize and react to medications differently than adults, often in unanticipated ways.
- ◆ For more than 30 years the AAP has emphasized the importance of studying medicines in pediatric populations.
- ◆ The AAP also advised labeling that would inform parents that the products have been shown to be ineffective in children under 6 and could lead to serious adverse reactions. Thursday's advisory is an important first step.
- ◆ The FDA expects to announce its recommendation for children ages 2 to 11 in early spring.
- ◆ Cough and cold symptoms are usually benign and self-limiting. Over-the-counter cough and cold medications will not cure these illnesses nor shorten their duration
- ◆ "Although these medications have been in use for a long time, now we've learned they have some risks, especially because of the difficulty in determining a safe and accurate dose for small children," states Dr. Jenkins from the AAP.
- ◆ .There are symptomatic interventions parents can do that are much safer for children."

. If a child under age 2 develops a fever, consult a pediatrician. For more suggestions on treating children without over-the-counter cough and cold drugs,

www.aap.org/publiced/BR_Infections.htm

