

Coughs



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



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.** (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- **Bronchitis.** This is a **respiratory tract infection**.
- A cold or the flu. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- **Croup.** (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- **Measles.** (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- 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.

Questions to Ask

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

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.

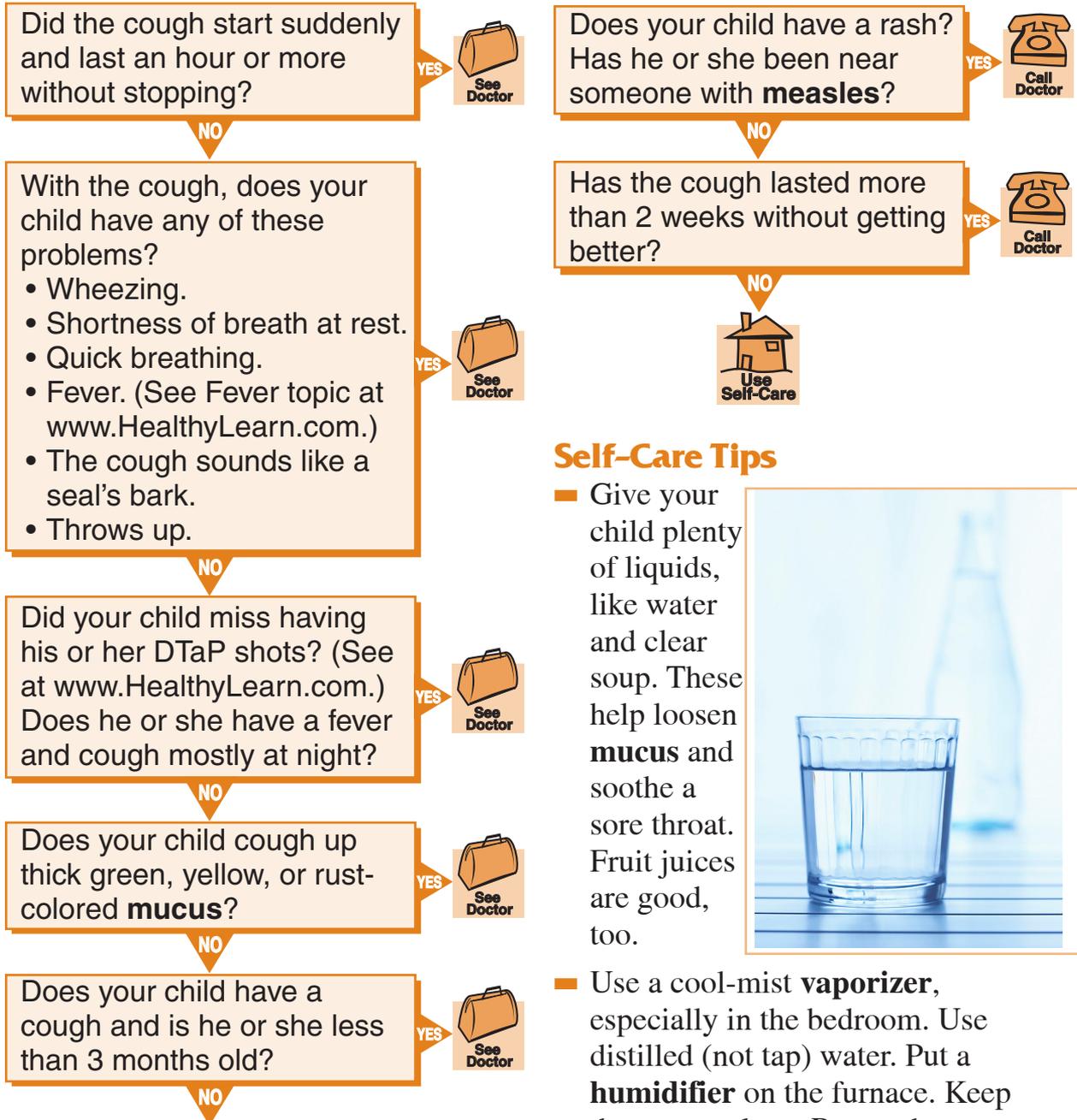


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Self-Care Tips

- Give your child plenty of liquids, like water and clear soup. These help loosen **mucus** and soothe a sore throat. Fruit juices are good, too.



- 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.
- 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 breast-feeding.
- *Don't* lie the baby down after feeding.



- Ask your child's doctor or **pharmacist** what kind of cough medicine is O.K. to give your child.
- Make your own cough medicine. Mix 1 part lemon juice and 2 parts honey. (*Don't* give this to children under 1 year old.)
- 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 5 years old.)
- *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. (See the "Vaccine Schedule" at www.HealthyLearn.com.)



- 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**. See "Signs of Reye's Syndrome" at www.HealthyLearn.com.)

- 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.

To Help Prevent a Cough and 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 he or she eats. For a child less than 4 years old, give foods that are soft and cut up. *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.
 - Chewing gum.
 - Peanut butter from a spoon.
 - Hard candy, sunflower or pumpkin seeds. (Wait until a child is age 5 years old to give these.)

