

Why no Antibiotics?



COUGH TREATMENT FOR CHILDREN

DEAR PARENTS,

You have come to the doctor today because your child is coughing. You are concerned and want treatment so that your child feels good again as quickly as possible.

This guideline addresses important questions regarding cough treatment for children and why antibiotics are not always necessary.



IS COUGHING BAD?

Coughing is a natural defensive reflex of the respiratory tract. It should therefore not be suppressed. Simple respiratory tract infections are common in children and become less frequent when they start school. Up to twelve infections per year are normal, which can last for up to two weeks. After a respiratory tract infection, the respiratory tract can still be sensitive, causing coughing in cold weather or with exertion. This makes one feel that a child is constantly ill.

CAUSES OF COUGHING

It is often accompanied by a runny nose. This is especially the case in the evening and at night because mucus flows backwards when a person is lying down and triggers a cough reflex. If the coughing is productive and mucus is expelled, the lower respiratory tract is inflamed.

WARNING SIGNS OF A MORE SERIOUS ILLNESS

Even normal respiratory tract infections can be accompanied by a high fever. Very fast breathing and painful breathing can indicate severe inflammation. In addition, if your child is very lethargic and no longer wants to eat, these are warning signs and you should consult a physician.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

For simple respiratory tract infections, a physical examination by your physician is sufficient. He will listen to the breathing sounds of the lungs, monitor the breathing patterns, and examine the ears and throat. If this does not indicate a more serious infection, no additional measures are needed.

If necessary, the blood will be examined for white blood cells (leukocytes) or inflammatory markers (e.g. CRP). If a severe infection or another cause for the coughing is suspected, an X-ray may be taken.

TREATMENT

Your doctor will recommend a treatment to you after the examination. Coughing itself should not be suppressed as it is a protective reflex of the body in order to get rid of mucus and pathogens. Drink plenty of fluids! Pay attention to how much your child drinks. If your child has a fever (temperature higher than 38.5°C) and feels poorly, has no appetite, or has pain in the limbs, the fever should be reduced. Typical medications for this are ibuprofen and paracetamol. Your doctor will recommend the medications to you in the appropriate dosage. In addition, you can also apply fever-reducing leg wraps with lukewarm water.



IMPORTANT! If the health of your child worsens or the illness lasts longer than two weeks, you should consult your physician again so that additional measures can be taken if needed.

WHY ANTIBIOTICS DO NOT HELP AGAINST A VIRAL INFECTION

As an antibiotic only attacks bacteria and not viruses, it is not effective against an uncomplicated respiratory tract infection.

Antibiotics can worsen the illness with side effects such as diarrhoea or fungal infection and therefore lead to longer absences from daycare centres or school. Trust your physician if he “only” uses basic medications and does not begin treatment with antibiotics.

Herbal cough syrups, on the other hand, are well-tolerated and can make expectoration easier and reduce inflammation. This guideline recommends treatment with a combination of thyme and ivy.

IMPORTANT TIPS FOR PARENTS



Ensure that your child drinks plenty of fluids.



Apply leg wraps if the fever is over 39°C



Viral infections **cannot** be treated with antibiotics.

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