

# HELPING THE SICK CHILD AT HOME

## COUGH

*This information does not replace qualified medical advice from your provider but can guide you on what you can do until regular office hours.*

A cough can sound awful, but usually isn't a sign of a serious condition. In fact, coughing is a healthy and important reflex that helps protect the airways in the throat and chest.

### Coughs that need immediate attention include:

- Barky or croupy cough – sounds like a barking dog or a seal, especially heard when taking a breath; may be worse at night
- Whooping cough – series of coughs followed by a gasp of breath; may be accompanied with turning blue or coughing until it causes vomiting
- Staccato cough (only worrisome in young infants) – repetitive, short coughs with short breaths in between
- Cough with difficulty breathing
- Cough in someone with known respiratory issues (e.g. asthma)

### What you can do:

- Dry air makes coughs worse. Use a cool-mist humidifier, both day and night.
- Post-nasal drip from nasal congestion is often the cause of a cough with a cold or allergies. Nasal saline followed by gentle suctioning helps with coughing.
- Offer plenty of fluids (formula or breastmilk for infants).
- For children >12 months old, honey is a natural cough suppressant. A tablespoon is found to be as effective as most cough syrups. **Avoid this on infants as it can be fatal.**
- For older children, you may also prop their heads up at night to ease the postnasal drip.
- Over-the-counter cough medication is not recommended for children. It can have dangerous side effects and is not very effective in children.

*If these recommendations do not work or there is something else that worries you, please go to the nearest urgent care for a physician assessment. For emergencies, call 911.*

