

WHAT'S UP DOC?

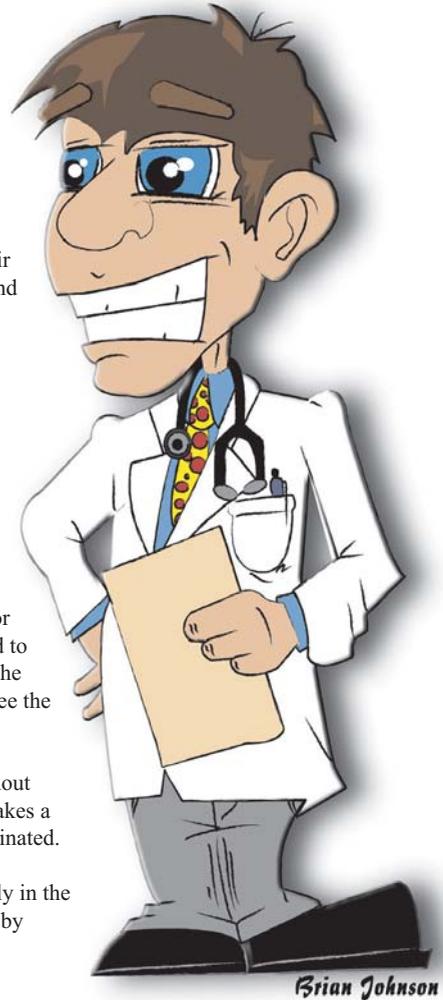
Q: When should I take my child to the doctor for a cough?

A: Coughing is a reflex our body has to keep the throat and airways clear. It helps the body heal and protect itself. Common causes of cough in children are cold, flu, sinus infections, asthma and allergies, lung infections like pneumonia, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), exposure to second hand smoke, and exposure to air pollutants. While most coughs last 2-3 weeks, chronic coughs can last for 8 weeks or more.

It is common for a child who has a cold or asthma to cough so much that mucus triggers their gag reflex, making them vomit. It is also common for children to have cough, runny nose, and mild fever with a cold. If the symptoms do not improve, you should contact your doctor.

However, you should contact your doctor to have your child evaluated any time you have concerns or in any of the following circumstances:

- High fever in a child with cough sometimes can mean pneumonia, especially if the child is breathing fast and looks sick.
- A “barky” cough may be croup, which is usually the result of a virus that causes swelling in the upper part of the airway. This type of cough may require special medication.
- Coughing with wheezing could mean that the lower airways are swollen - as with asthma or bronchiolitis. (If you know your child has asthma and you know what to do, you do not need to seek medical attention immediately unless your child is having trouble breathing.) If this is the first time your child is wheezing, you should consider wheezing as a serious symptom and see the doctor, especially if your child has a blue or dusky color to the lips, face or tongue.
- Whooping cough (pertussis) is a contagious infection that causes coughs back to back without breathing in between. At the end of the coughing, the child will take a deep breath in that makes a “whooping” sound. It is usually more severe in infants under age one who are not fully vaccinated.
- Any cough that persists for more than 3 weeks may be caused by a common cold, especially in the wintertime when your child can get one cold right after another. However, it may be caused by something else such as asthma, allergies, or a sinus infection and should be evaluated.
- Your child has a cough and is 3 months old or younger.



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Tariq M. Khan, M.D., FAAP
Maria I. Diaz, M.D., FAAP
Katie M. Bell, RPA-C
Amy R. Beach, FNP
Dawn M. Hezel, PNP

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