

## Cold & Flu Health Center

### Honey May Soothe Kids' Coughs

#### Study: Honey May Be an Alternative to Over-the-Counter Cough Medicines

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WebMD Medical News

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Dec. 3, 2007 -- A little bit of honey, taken before bedtime, may ease coughing in children.

Pennsylvania State University researchers reported that news today, based on 130 children with [coughs](#).

On average, the kids were 5 years old (age range: 2 to 18) and had had a cough from colds for about four days.

When the kids saw a doctor about their cough, the parents rated the severity of the kids' cough [symptoms](#), including frequency of coughing and effects on [sleep](#).

Ian Paul, MD, and colleagues sent the parents home with one of three treatments:

- A dose of dextromethorphan, a drug used in many over-the-counter cough suppressants

- A dose of buckwheat honey

- No treatment

The parents gave the children their assigned treatment half an hour before bedtime. The next morning, the parents again rated their children's symptoms.

Honey ranked highest, followed by dextromethorphan, and the placebo was in last place in terms of cough relief.

A closer look at the data shows that honey trumped no treatment. But honey's slim lead over dextromethorphan may have been due to chance.

Honey's benefits may be due to its antioxidants and microbe-fighting effects, Paul's team notes. They add that dark honeys, such as buckwheat honey, tend to be rich in antioxidants and that further studies are needed to check their findings.

Few kids had side effects from the treatments, though mild hyperactivity, nervousness, and [insomnia](#) were reported in five kids in the honey group, two children in the over-the-counter medicine group, and none in the placebo group.

Children less than 12 months old should not be fed honey since it can cause [botulism](#) in infants.

The study, funded by the National Honey Board, appears in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

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