Cough, Child

Cough is an important way that the body clears mucus or other material from the respiratory tract. Cough is also a common sign of an illness or medical problem.

CAUSES

There are many things that can cause a cough. We are not certain what is causing your child's cough. Depending on how long the cough has been present, the most common reasons for cough are:

- Respiratory infections (nose, sinuses, airways or lungs) – most commonly due to a virus.
- Mucus dripping back from the nose (*post-nasal drip* or *Upper Airway Cough Syndrome*).
- Allergies (to pollen, dust, animal dander, foods, etc.).
- Asthma.
- Irritants in the environment (smoke, fumes, etc.).
- Exercise.
- Acid backing up from the stomach into the esophagus (*gastroesophageal reflux*).
- Habit.
- Reaction to medicines.

SYMPTOMS

- Coughs can be dry and hacking (they do not produce any mucus).
- Coughs can be productive (bring up mucus).
- Coughs can vary as to the time of day or time of year.
- Coughs can be more common in certain environments. All these are clues to the cause of your child's cough.

Your caregiver may ask for tests to determine why your child has a cough. These may include one or more of the following:

Your caregiver may try a few things to figure out the cause of your child's cough including:

- Blood tests.
- Breathing tests.
- X-rays or other imaging studies.
- Trial of medications.
- Wait to see what happens over time.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Give your child medicine as ordered by your caregiver.
- Avoid anything that causes coughing at school and at home.
- Keep your child away from cigarette smoke.

Finding out the results of your test

Not all test results are available during your visit. If tests were done, your results may not back during the visit. If need be, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF YOUR CHILD:

- Wheezes (high pitched whistling sound on breathing out or in).
- Your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 100.5º F (38.1° C) or higher for more than 1

day.
- Has new symptoms.
- Has a cough that is worse.
- Wakes from the cough.
- Still has a cough in 2 weeks.
- Vomits from the cough.
- Has chest pain.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOUR CHILD:
- Is short of breath.
- Coughs up blood.
- Your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**

Document Released: 03/26/2009 Document Re-Released: 01/09/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.