

## Lifewire: Government issues warning over cough and cold remedies

by Ven\_Griva

If you are the parent or guardian of a young child, experts from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a warning for you.

An estimated 7,000 children ages 11 and younger are treated in hospital emergency rooms annually after ingesting cough and cold medications, according to a study by the CDC.

CDC researchers reviewed data from the years 2004 and 2005, the most recent available, from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System to analyze emergency room visits due to cough and cold remedies.

About two-thirds of those emergency room visits have been linked to children ingesting over-the-counter cold remedies without the knowledge of a parent, said the CDC study published Jan. 30 in the online edition of *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Children between the ages of 2 and 5 accounted for 64 percent of all adverse drug events from cough and cold medications, CDC researchers found. Nearly 80 percent of the events for this age group were children swallowing medications when their parents weren't looking.

Among all age groups, 93 percent of the children did not require hospital admission. However, 25 percent needed additional treatment.

"Parents need to be vigilant about keeping these medicines out of their children's reach," said Dr. Denise Cardo, director of Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion for the CDC. "They should refrain from encouraging children to take medicine by telling the children that medication is candy."

Cardo also said that adults should take their own medicines when and where children cannot see them.

The FDA mandates that all OTC cough and cold remedies sold in the United States come with a warning label saying to keep them out of the reach of children.

Earlier in January, pharmaceutical companies voluntarily withdrew from the U.S. market all OTC cough and cold medications sold for use by children younger than 2 due to safety concerns, the CDC said. Parents and

caregivers should throw away leftover cold remedies originally sold for use by children age 2 and younger, the FDA says.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is currently reviewing the safety of those medicines for use by children between the ages of 2 and 11.

## WITH THE GRAIN

Whole-grain foods and snacks are getting rave reviews again from medical researchers. Recent praise comes from researchers examining metabolic syndrome, an increasingly common cluster of conditions found in patients that include obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

And even if you are not worried about the above ailments, a diet featuring oatmeal, seven-grain bread, whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, and snacks such as granola bars, popcorn and whole-wheat crackers might help you to achieve significant weight loss, according to a study from Penn State University College of Medicine.

"Consumption of whole grains has been associated with a lower body weight and lower blood pressure," said Penny Kris-Etherton, co-author of report on the small study published in the January issue of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. "We thought that incorporating whole grains into a heart-healthy, weight-loss diet may provide the same benefits to people at risk from chronic diseases."

The Penn State team studied 50 obese adults - 25 male and 25 female - between the ages of 20 and 65 known to have metabolic syndrome. They were randomly assigned to a group that received instructions to consume all of their grain servings from whole grains or another group that got all of their grain servings from refined grains.

"We asked participants in the whole-grain group to focus on foods that had whole grains as the first ingredient," said lead author Heather Katcher.

During the 12-week study, participants received the same dietary advice on weight loss. They were encouraged to exercise moderately.

Researchers suggested a daily diet consisting of five servings of fruits and vegetables, three servings of low-fat dairy products, and two servings of lean meat, fish or poultry.

Participants in both groups lost inches around their waists and significant weight - between 8 and 11 pounds on average. Yet the loss of belly fat was measurably greater in the whole-grain group.

The whole-grain group decreased the C-reactive protein levels in their blood by 38 percent, Katcher said. High levels of C-reactive protein have been linked to an increased risk of diabetes, hypertension and heart attack.

"Typically you would expect weight loss to be associated with a decrease in C-reactive protein, but the refined-grain group showed no decrease in this marker of inflammation even though they lost weight," said Kris-Etherton.

Consumers need to be wary when purchasing products merchandised as high in whole grains. She recommends whole-grain foods where at least 51 percent of the grain comes from whole grain.

"There are a lot of foods around that claim they contain whole-grain but are not really major sources of whole grain."

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