

Parental misinterpretations of over-the-counter pediatric cough and cold medication labels.

April 8, 2011

Lokker N, Sanders LM, Perrin EM, et al. Parental misinterpretations of over-the-counter pediatric cough and cold medication labels. *Pediatrics*. 2009;123(6):1464-1471. doi:10.1542/peds.2008-0854.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/parental-misinterpretations-over-counter-pediatric-cough-and-cold-medication-labels>

The US Food and Drug Administration discourages the use of over-the-counter cold medications in children younger than 2 years. Despite this, most parents in this study thought such medications were entirely appropriate for their infants, and appeared to be unduly influenced by the product labeling and graphics. Prior research has identified low [health literacy](#) as a prominent risk factor for misinterpreting prescription drug labels. This study also found that limited numeracy (the ability to apply arithmetic operations to everyday tasks) was a risk factor for incorrectly interpreting the product labeling. A prior [trial](#) used pictorial displays to explain medication dosing in children and resulted in fewer errors and improved adherence.