



FDA: Over-the-Counter Cold Meds Too Risky for Babies

Officials Fear Parents Unaware of Potential Dangers to Children Younger than 2

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Parents should not give sniffling babies and toddlers over-the-counter cough and cold medicines -- they are too risky for tots so small, the government will declare Thursday.

The Food and Drug Administration still has not decided if the remedies are appropriate for older children to continue using, officials told The Associated Press. Expect a decision on that by spring, the deadline necessary to notify manufacturers before they begin production for next fall's cold season.

For now, the FDA is issuing a public health advisory on Thursday to warn parents to avoid these drugs for children under age 2 "because serious and potentially life-threatening side effects can occur."

It is not the first warning about cold remedies and tots: Drug companies last October quit selling dozens of versions targeted specifically to babies and toddlers. That same month, the FDA's own scientific advisers voted that the drugs don't even work in small children and shouldn't be used in preschoolers, either -- anyone under age 6.

Thursday's advisory marks the government's first official ruling on the issue: Don't give the drugs to children under 2. And it comes now because the FDA is worried that parents haven't gotten that message despite all the publicity last fall.

They may still have infant-targeted drugs at home, or they may buy drugs meant for older children to give to hacking tots instead, said Dr. Charles Ganley, FDA's nonprescription drugs chief.

"We still have a concern," Ganley said. "It falls out of people's consciousness. We're still in the middle of cold season right now."

Ganley said he is particularly concerned by recent surveys that suggest many parents don't believe over-the-counter cold remedies could pose a problem, especially if they've used them with an older child who seemed to get better.

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