



HARVARD  
School of Public Health

Toplines

NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health

# **Children's OTC Cold Medicines: The Public, and Parents, Weigh In**

December 2007

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### Methodology

The NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health survey, *Children's OTC Cold Medicines: The Public, and Parents, Weigh In*, is part of a series of projects about health-related issues by NPR (National Public Radio), the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Harvard School of Public Health. Representatives of the three organizations worked together to develop the survey questionnaire and to analyze the results, with NPR maintaining sole editorial control over its broadcasts on the surveys. The survey research team included Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., Claudia Deane, M.A., and Liz Hamel from the Kaiser Family Foundation; Professor Robert Blendon, Sc.D., and John Benson, M.A. of the Harvard School of Public Health; and Anne Gudenkauf, Joe Neel, Allison Aubrey, and Joanne Silberner from NPR.

Fieldwork was done by telephone Nov. 15 – 20, suspended for the Thanksgiving holiday, and then completed Nov. 25, 2007, among a nationally representative sample of 1,522 randomly selected respondents ages 18 and over, including an oversample of parents of young children, by ICR/International Communications Research. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Sizes of the relevant populations and their associated margins of sampling error are:

	<i>N</i>	<i>Margin of sampling error</i>
Total population	1,522	+/- 3 percentage points
Parent of child <18	759	+/- 5 percentage points
Parent of child <6	572	+/- 5 percentage points

For results based on smaller subsets of respondents the margin of sampling error is somewhat higher.

Please note: (1) Table percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. (2) Values less than 0.5% are indicated by an asterisk (\*). (3) "Vol." indicates that a response was volunteered by the respondent and not an explicitly offered choice. (4) Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

(INTERVIEWER READ) My first question is about over-the-counter medicines. These are drugs that you can buy without a prescription, like cough medicines, or painkillers like aspirin, Motrin or Tylenol. Over-the-counter drugs do NOT include vitamins and herbal medicines.

1. Overall, how confident are you in the safety of over-the-counter drugs sold in the United States? Would you say you are very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

<b>Total</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	
<b>41</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	Very confident
<b>43</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>	Somewhat confident
<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	Not too confident
<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	Not at all confident
<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	Refused

(INTERVIEWER READ) As you may know, the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, is the federal agency responsible for regulating over-the-counter medicines sold in the U.S.

2. One of the FDA's main roles is to make sure that over-the-counter drugs are safe for consumer use. Do you think that the FDA should also be in charge of determining whether over-the-counter medicines are effective, pulling drugs from the market if they determine they don't work well, or do you think that consumers and their doctors should decide for themselves whether over-the-counter medicines seem effective for them?

<b>Total</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	
<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>45</b>	The FDA should also be in charge
<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>50</b>	Consumers and their doctors should decide for themselves
<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>1</b>	Refused

(INTERVIEWER READ) Now thinking specifically about over-the-counter medicines that are targeted for use by children...

3. Overall, how confident are you in the safety of children's over-the-counter drugs sold in the United States? Would you say you are very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
22	25	21	Very confident
42	48	49	Somewhat confident
19	15	16	Not too confident
12	11	13	Not at all confident
5	1	1	Don't know
*	--	--	Refused

4. Do you think that pharmaceutical companies do enough testing to ensure that over-the-counter drugs for children are safe and effective, or do you think they do not do enough testing on these drugs?

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
35	40	37	Do enough testing
52	48	53	Do not do enough testing
12	11	10	Don't know
1	*	1	Refused

(ROTATE VERBIAGE IN PARENS)

5. As far as you know, do pharmaceutical companies test over-the-counter drugs for children (more thoroughly) than they test similar drugs for adults, (less thoroughly), or about the same amount?

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
12	11	14	More thoroughly
15	14	14	Less thoroughly
57	61	57	About the same amount
17	14	15	Don't know
*	*	*	Refused

6. Are you the parent of any children under age 18 living at home, or not?

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
36	100	100	Yes
64	--	--	No
--	--	--	Don't know
--	--	--	Refused

7. Are any of your children now living with you... (INSERT FIRST ITEM)? Are any of them (INSERT NEXT ITEM)?  
 (INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF RESPONDENT IS CLEAR ON CHILDREN'S AGES, I.E. "I have two children aged 3 and 5", ENTER CODE 1 IN APPROPRIATE ITEM AND ENTER CODE 2 FOR OTHER WITHOUT ASKING)

- a. Under age 2
- b. At least two years old but under 6 years old
- c. At least 6 years old but under 12 years old
- d. At least 12 years old but under 18 years old

6/7. Combo Table based on total respondents

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	Parent
<b>17</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	Any children age 0 to under 6
<b>8</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>48</b>	Any children under age 2
<b>14</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>80</b>	Any children age 2 to under 6
<b>18</b>	<b>52</b>	--	No children age 0 to under 6
<b>64</b>	--	--	Not a parent
--	--	--	Don't know
--	--	--	Refused

(SCRAMBLE ITEMS)

8. Please tell me how much you trust each of the following sources to provide accurate information about the safety and effectiveness of over-the-counter medicines for children. (First,) what about (INSERT)?  
 (READ FIRST TIME, THEN READ FOR EVERY 3RD ITEM; ALWAYS READ FOR ITEM c: Do you trust them a lot, somewhat, not too much, or not at all to provide accurate information about over-the-counter medicines for children?)

Based on total parents (N = 759)

	Parents					
	A lot	Some	Not too much	Not at all	Don't know	Refused
a. Your child's doctor	<b>76</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	--
b. Your pharmacist	<b>58</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>
c. Your family and friends	<b>29</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	--
d. The FDA – that is, the Food and Drug Administration	<b>29</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	--
e. Advertisements for over-the-counter medicines	<b>4</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>
f. The information about the product included in packages of over-the-counter medicine	<b>32</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>*</b>	--
g. National organizations of pediatricians	<b>41</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>*</b>

Based on total parents with at least one child under age 6 (N = 572)

Parents of child <6	Confidence level					
	A lot	Some	Not too much	Not at all	Don't know	Refused
a. Your child's doctor	71	25	2	1	*	--
b. Your pharmacist	50	41	6	2	1	*
c. Your family and friends	24	49	17	9	1	--
d. The FDA – that is, the Food and Drug Administration	29	55	11	4	1	--
e. Advertisements for over-the-counter medicines	3	42	28	26	*	*
f. The information about the product included in packages of over-the-counter medicine	27	55	12	5	*	--
g. National organizations of pediatricians	41	47	4	4	3	1

9. Last time you bought an over-the-counter drug that your child had never taken before, how confident were you that you had enough information about the drug? Would you say very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Parents	Parents of child <6	Confidence level
33	29	Very confident
49	52	Somewhat confident
11	11	Not too confident
3	5	Not at all confident
3	2	Don't know
1	1	Refused
<b>N=759</b>	<b>N=572</b>	

10. Have you ever used over-the-counter cold or cough medicines for your children under two, or not?

Based on total parents of children under 2 (N = 254)

Parents of child <2		Response
56		Yes
42		No
2		Don't know
*		Refused

10a. Has your child's doctor ever specifically recommended that you use an over-the-counter cold or cough medicine for your children under two, or not?

Based on total parents of children under 2 (N = 254)

Parents of child <2		Response
45		Yes
52		No
3		Don't know
--		Refused

11. Thinking about your children aged 2 to under 6, have you ever used over-the-counter cold or cough medicines for them since they turned two, or not?

Based on total parents of children 2 to under 6 (N = 473)

Parents of child 2 to <6	
<b>79</b>	Yes
<b>20</b>	No
<b>1</b>	Don't know
<b>--</b>	Refused

- 11a. Has your child's doctor ever specifically recommended that you use an over-the-counter cold or cough medicine for your children aged two to under six, or not?

Based on total parents of children 2 to under 6 (N = 473)

Parents of child 2 to <6	
<b>64</b>	Yes
<b>33</b>	No
<b>3</b>	Don't know
<b>--</b>	Refused

(SCRAMBLE; ITEM c SHOULD ALWAYS BE LAST)

12. For each, tell me if this is a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason why you have used over-the-counter cold or cough medicines for your children: What about (READ ITEM)?

Based on total parents of children under 6 who have ever used OTC cold or cough medicines (N = 439)

	Parents of child < 6				
	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	Don't know	Refused
a. To help your child sleep better	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>	*	--
b. To relieve your child's cold symptoms, including coughing	<b>78</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	*	--
c. To make sure that you, as a parent, get some sleep	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>66</b>	*	--

13. Would you say you understand whether over-the-counter cold and cough medicines are safe and effective for use in your own children, or would you say you are confused about this?

Parents	Parents of child <6	
<b>64</b>	<b>61</b>	Understand
<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	Confused
<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	Refused
<b>N=759</b>	<b>N=572</b>	

14. In your own view, how effective are children's over-the-counter cold and cough medicines in relieving cold symptoms for (INSERT): very effective, somewhat effective, not too effective, or not at all effective?  
(INTERVIEWER NOTE: This question is asking about children generally, not necessarily about your own children)

Based on total parents (N = 759)

<b>Parents</b>	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not too effective	Not at all effective	Don't know	Refused
a. Children under age 2	<b>13</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	*
b. Children age two to under six years old	<b>16</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	*

Based on total parents with at least one child under age 6 (N = 572)

<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not too effective	Not at all effective	Don't know	Refused
a. Children under age 2	<b>14</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	*
b. Children age two to under six years old	<b>18</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	*

15. In your own view, how effective are children's over-the-counter cold and cough medicines in helping (INSERT) get a good night's sleep: very effective, somewhat effective, not too effective, or not at all effective?  
(INTERVIEWER NOTE: This question is asking about children generally, not necessarily about your own children)

Based on total parents (N = 759)

<b>Parents</b>	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not too effective	Not at all effective	Don't know	Refused
a. Children under age 2	<b>20</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	*
b. Children age two to under six years old	<b>23</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	*

Based on total parents with at least one child under age 6 (N = 572)

<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not too effective	Not at all effective	Don't know	Refused
a. Children under age 2	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	*
b. Children age two to under six years old	<b>18</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>

16. In your own view, how safe are children's over-the-counter cold and cough medicines for (INSERT)? Would you say...?  
 (INTERVIEWER NOTE: This question is asking about children generally, not necessarily about your own children)

Based on total parents (N = 759)

	<b>Parents</b>					
	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Not too safe	Not at all safe	Don't know	Refused
a. Children under age 2	<b>19</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	--
b. Children age two to under six years old	<b>25</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	*

Based on total parents with at least one child under age 6 (N = 572)

	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>					
	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Not too safe	Not at all safe	Don't know	Refused
a. Children under age 2	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	--
b. Children age two to under six years old	<b>23</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	*

(ROTATE VERBIAGE IN PARENS)

- 16b. All in all, thinking back over the past several years, would you say your views on the safety of children's over-the-counter cold and cough medicines have become more (negative), more (positive), or would you say they have stayed about the same?

<b>Parents</b>	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	
<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>	More negative
<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	More positive
<b>52</b>	<b>55</b>	Stayed about the same
<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	<b>--</b>	Refused
<b>N=759</b>	<b>N=572</b>	

17. Lately there has been some discussion of the safety and effectiveness of over-the-counter cold and cough medicines for younger children among groups such as the FDA, drug manufacturers, pediatricians, and in the news. Would you say you have heard a lot, some, not too much or nothing at all about this?

<b>Total</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	
<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	A lot
<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	Some
<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	Not too much
<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	Nothing at all
<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>--</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	Refused

(SCRAMBLE ITEMS)

18. As a result of hearing about these discussions on the safety and effectiveness of over-the-counter cold and cough medicines for children, have you done any of the following things in recent weeks, or not? Have you (INSERT), or not?

- a. Talked to friends or fellow parents about this issue
- b. Talked to your child's doctor about this issue
- c. Gone online to learn more about this issue
- d. Talked to a pharmacist about this issue
- e. Stopped using these medications

17/18. Combo Table

Parents	Parents of child <6	
87	86	Have heard discussions of the safety/effectiveness of cold/cough medicines for younger children
44	47	Talked to friends/fellow parents
25	28	Talked to your child's doctor
22	21	Gone online to learn more
13	14	Talked to a pharmacist
30	34	Stopped using these medications
12	14	Have not heard discussions of the safety/effectiveness of cold/cough medicines for younger children
1	--	Don't know
--	--	Refused
<b>N=759</b>	<b>N=572</b>	

(ROTATE ITEMS 1 AND 2)

19. Thinking specifically about your child or children who are under age 2, which of the following best describes your reaction to the recent news about the safety and effectiveness of over-the-counter cold and cough medicines:

- 1 You plan to stop giving your children these medicines
- 2 You plan to continue giving your children these medicines
- 3 You haven't decided what you will do
- 4 You have never used these medicines for your child and don't plan to
- 5 (Vol.) Never used but may/will use in the future

7a/17/19. Combo Table based on total parents of children under 2 (N = 254)

Parents of child <2	
85	Have heard discussions of the safety/effectiveness of cold/cough medicines for younger children
16	Plan to stop giving your children these medicines
20	Plan to continue giving your children these medicines
26	Haven't decided what you will do
22	Have never used these medicines for your child and don't plan to
1	(Vol.) Never used but may/will use in the future
15	Have not heard discussions of the safety/effectiveness of cold/cough medicines for younger children
--	Don't know
--	Refused

(IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED Q.19, READ ALTERNATE VERBIAGE IN PARENS)  
 (ROTATE ITEMS 1 AND 2 IN SAME ORDER AS Q.19)

20. Thinking specifically about your child or children who are aged 2 to under six, which of the following best describes your reaction to the recent news about the safety and effectiveness of over-the-counter cold and cough medicines:  
 (Thinking specifically about your child or children who are aged 2 to under six, which of the following best describes your reaction?)

7b/17/20. Combo Table based on total parents of children 2 to < 6 (N=473)

**Parents of child 2 to < 6**

<b>85</b>	Have heard discussions of the safety/effectiveness of cold/cough medicines for younger children
<b>15</b>	Plan to stop giving your children these medicines
<b>30</b>	Plan to continue giving your children these medicines
<b>28</b>	Haven't decided what you will do
<b>9</b>	Have never used these medicines for your child and don't plan to
<b>1</b>	(Vol.) Never used but may/will use in the future
<b>15</b>	Have not heard discussions of the safety/effectiveness of cold/cough medicines for younger children
--	Don't know
--	Refused

(ROTATE 1-3/3-1)

(P.N. – WHEN ROTATING 1-3, USE 1ST VERBIAGE IN PARENS; WHEN ROTATING 3-1 USE 2ND VERBIAGE IN PARENS)

21. If the FDA were to put a label on children's cold and cough medicines saying that they have been found to be safe but there is no evidence that they actually work in relieving children's cold symptoms, would you (READ LIST)?

**Parents    Parents of child <6**

<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	Probably NOT use (these medicines/them) for your child
<b>45</b>	<b>49</b>	Probably use them if your doctor recommends them for your child
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	Probably use (them/these medicines) if they seemed to work for your family
<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	Don't know
<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>	Refused
<b>N=759</b>	<b>N=572</b>	

DEMOGRAPHICS

(ROTATE ITEMS IN PARENS)

22. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as: (a Democrat), (a Republican), an independent or what?

INTERVIEWER IF REFUSED READ: We understand and respect that this information is private, we ask only for research purposes, and all your answers are confidential.

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
31	28	25	Democrat
23	26	25	Republican
31	33	35	Independent
2	2	2	Do not vote/None
1	*	1	Something else
6	6	7	Don't know
5	4	5	Refused

23/23a. What is your age?

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
20	19	34	18-29
39	67	58	30-49
23	11	6	50-64
16	2	2	65+
--	--	--	Don't know
1	*	*	Refused

23b. What is your current employment status – do you work full-time for pay, work part-time for pay, or are you a homemaker, a student, retired, currently unemployed, or what?

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
60	71	63	Employed (NET)
50	62	54	Work full-time for pay
10	9	9	Work part-time for pay
10	18	26	A homemaker
4	2	4	A student
16	2	2	Retired
5	2	3	Currently unemployed
2	2	2	Disabled
2	2	*	Other
--	--	--	Don't know
1	1	1	Refused

24. Are you of Hispanic origin or background?
25. Are you White Hispanic or Black Hispanic?
26. Are you white, black, or some other race?

Race Summary Table

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
67	61	57	White (non-Hispanic)
11	12	12	Black (non-Hispanic)
3	1	2	Asian (non-Hispanic)
13	20	23	Hispanic (NET)
9	14	16	White Hispanic
3	3	4	Black Hispanic
1	2	3	Hispanic unspecified
3	4	5	Some other race
*	--	--	Don't know
3	2	1	Refused

27. What is the last grade of school you completed?
28. (Asked of those who say they graduated college) Was that an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or what?

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
4	5	6	8 <sup>th</sup> grade or less
11	7	11	Some high school
31	29	29	Graduated high school
27	29	25	Some college
13	15	14	College graduate
13	13	13	Post-graduate training
*	*	*	Don't know
2	1	1	Refused

29. Are you: (READ LIST)

Total	Parents	Parents of child <6	
56	73	72	Married and living with your spouse
7	8	15	Living with a partner but not married
2	4	3	Separated
8	6	2	Divorced
6	1	*	Widowed
17	6	8	Never married
--	--	--	Don't know
2	2	*	Refused

30/30a Last year, that is in 2006, what was your total family income from all sources, BEFORE taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category.

<b>Total</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	
14	12	17	Less than \$20K
11	10	13	\$20K but less than \$30K
8	8	9	\$30K but less than 40K
9	8	9	\$40K but less than \$50K
9	9	9	\$50K but less than \$60K
11	15	11	\$60K but less than \$80K
8	11	10	\$80K but less than \$100K
12	15	13	\$100K or more (NET)
7	10	8	\$100 to under \$150K
3	2	3	\$150K to under \$200K
2	3	2	\$200K or more
5	4	4	Don't know
13	8	5	Refused

32. REGION

<b>Total</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	
19	18	17	Northeast
22	20	21	North central
36	36	37	South
22	26	25	West

33. RECORD METRO STATUS FROM SAMPLE:

<b>Total</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	
33	32	29	Urban
45	48	49	Suburban
22	20	21	Rural

D01. RESPONDENT GENDER

<b>Total</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Parents of child &lt;6</b>	
46	43	45	Male
54	57	55	Female



HARVARD  
School of Public Health

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