

*The Truth*  *About Health*

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## COUGH MEDICINES INEFFECTIVE

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According to a study published in the British Medical Journal, over-the-counter cough medicines are not very effective in fighting the symptoms of the common cold or flu.

“We found that there is little evidence supporting the effectiveness of over-the-counter cough medicines,” said lead author of the study, Knut Schroeder, MD, researcher at University of Bristol, England.

Schroeder analyzed various types of cough medicines including, antihistamines, cough suppressants, expectorants, antihistamine-decongestant combinations, and other drug combinations.

2,166 people with cold or flu symptoms participated in 15 clinical trials.

Results showed that antihistamines were not any more effective than a placebo.

Cough suppressants were compared with placebo in five of the trials; Codeine was tested in two studies against a placebo, and was not found to be more effective; Two studies analyzed dextromethorphan (referred to as DM on labels), was found more effective than placebo, but no significant effect.

Because coughs related to colds aren't considered a serious condition, Schroeder's recommendation was to get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids — not to take medicine.

Mark C. Merlin, MD, Holistic and Integrative Medicine Specialist in Atlanta, explained that the cough is the body's signal of infection and needs to be treated with herbals or acupuncture — Acupuncture is effective in ridding the body of infection and herbs work to build up the immune system.

SOURCE: British Medical Journal, February 9, 2002; WebMD Health, [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com).