

Antihistamines not recommended for prolonged non-specific cough in children

Clinical question	Are antihistamines effective for prolonged non-specific cough in children?
Bottom line	Two studies found that chronic cough significantly improved in both treatment and placebo groups with no difference between the two groups. One small study, however, reported that children who had chronic cough associated with seasonal allergic rhinitis who were treated with cetirizine improved significantly more than children on placebo, and this difference was evident by two weeks.
Caveat	The three included studies were different in several ways. There was some clinical heterogeneity in the participants of the studies (different age groups), all of three studies used a different type of antihistamine, and in two studies children had allergic rhinitis arguably antihistamines would be more efficacious in these children.
Context	Non-specific cough is defined as non-productive cough in the absence of identifiable respiratory disease or known aetiology. It is a common condition, and children are treated with a variety of therapies, including antihistamines.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Chang AB et al. Antihistamines for prolonged non-specific cough in children. Cochrane Reviews 2008, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD005604. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD005604.pub3. This review contains five trials involving 1,145 participants.
Pearls No. 91, September 2008, written by Brian R McAvoy	

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners. They are funded by the New Zealand Guidelines Group.

PEARLS provide guidance on whether a treatment is effective or ineffective. PEARLS are prepared as an educational resource and do not replace clinician judgement in the management of individual cases.

View PEARLS online at:

- www.cochranepriarycare.org