

# Cough and cold medicines can cause serious side effects in young children

Coughs and colds in young children can be a major burden on many families. In the latest edition of Australian Prescriber, Dr Valerie Sung and Dr Noel Cranswick from the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne consider the evidence against cough products for children and suggest alternative remedies that parents can try.

"When a child goes to the doctor with cough or cold symptoms, the most important first step is to make the correct diagnosis and exclude serious causes. Management of a cough should be directed at the underlying case," the authors write.

In September 2008 cough and cold medicines for children under two years

were rescheduled to 'prescription only'. The USA and the UK have introduced similar restrictions in response to reports of side effects, accidental overdoses and lack of evidence that they are actually effective in young children.

"It is well known that cough and cold products in children are a major cause of unintentional drug overdoses, and are associated with sudden infant deaths," the authors write.

A recent Cochrane review found treatments were no more effective than placebo for acute cough in children and adults, however other studies have been less conclusive.

"Data on the effectiveness of cough and cold medicines in children under

two years old are extremely limited. There is no reliable evidence to recommend their use in this age group," say Dr Sung and Dr Cranswick.

"Parents should also understand that these remedies will not change the course of their child's illness, and may cause unwanted side effects such as drowsiness, headaches and vomiting," they warn.

Other treatments which should be considered include adequate fluids and rest, saline drops for nasal infections, and honey in children over one year old.

"Cough and cold medicines must be avoided in children under two years and should not be recommended in children of any age," the authors conclude. To

read the full article, which includes a table listing the potential side effects for different cough medicines, visit [www.australianprescriber.com](http://www.australianprescriber.com).

*Australian Prescriber is an independent peer-reviewed journal providing critical commentary on therapeutic topics for health professionals, particularly doctors in general practice. It is published by the National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS), an independent, non-profit organisation for quality use of medicines funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Australian Prescriber is distributed every two months in hard copy to health professionals, free of charge, and online in full text at [www.australianprescriber.com](http://www.australianprescriber.com)*

## German museum man says Alexander the Great was mainly Greek

Skopje may continue the already two-decades-long battle over the right to use the name Macedonia, but history is clearly on the side of Athens, a scholar said Friday. At the core of the strife is the national identity of Alexander the Great, the Macedonian conqueror from the 4th century BC.

"Alexander was basically a Greek and in no case a forefather of today's Slavic Macedonians," the director of Reiss-Engelhorn Museum, Alfred Wiczorek, told the German Press Agency dpa. "Macedonians and Greeks understood each others, as they spoke the same language." The exhibition "Alexander the Great and the Opening of the World" opened on Friday at the museum. It offers impressive insight into the short life of one among the ancient world's greatest leaders. Before he died in 323 BC, aged just 32, Alexander stormed the southeastern Mediterranean and sliced through the Persian empire, leaving a massive cultural and historical legacy in his wake. The exhibition in Mannheim, in southern Germany, follows his course to Central Asia and demonstrates the cultural, economical and social upheavals caused by his conquests. Two and a half millennia later, Greece is blocking Skopje, which emerged as a sovereign state from the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in 1991, from using that name. Athens insists that only its northern province, Alexander's homeland, has the right to it. Slavs began arriving from Asia in the 6th century, a millennium after Alexander died. These were the predecessors of Slavic Macedonians, who represent a three-quarter majority in the former Yugoslav republic, which has a significant, 25-per cent Albanian minority. Yet contemporary Skopjans claim the heritage of the great king, putting his Star of Vergina on the national flag and naming major buildings and projects, such as the Skopje airport and the key highway, after Alexander. The latest effort aimed at proving relation with Alexander is a plan to put multi-million-dollar statue of him on a prancing horse on the sprawling central square in the capital. All that does not impress Wiczorek. "The latest discoveries clearly prove that Macedonians and Greeks of the Alexander era were closely related," he said. The row over the name has so far cost Skopje membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which Greece vetoed last year. It is also hindering the country's closer ties to the EU.

## Cafe Carnivale Presents George Doukas' Balcano and Maria Yiakoulis & Out of the Blue

Say yiassou to Greece with 2 nights of traditional and contemporary music. In October Paddington will come alive with Greek music for two consecutive weeks. George Doukas' Balcano followed by Maria Yiakoulis and Out of the Blue will delight lovers of Greek music, presenting a fusion of traditional and contemporary styles.

Firstly the exciting singer-songwriter George Doukas and his ensemble Balcano will mesmerize audiences with a fusion of Greek, Serbian and Balkan gypsy music and dance on October 16.

Doukas' virtuosic guitar and bouzouki playing has enchanted audiences from intimate venues and tavernas to Greek festivals and larger concerts alongside artists such as Sakellariou, Doukissa, Floriniotis and Dalaras. Balcano crosses cultural and political boundaries blending brass and gaida with bouzouki, baglama, tzoura, percussion, drums, bass and keyboards with

clarinet, saxophone and trumpet.

In addition to Doukas, Balcano comprises of Bale Stocjevski, Spiro Arcoudis, Steve Elphick, Ramondo Fioravanti, Marcus Holden, Helene Doukas plus a guest artist.

After audiences have gotten a taste of Greek music they will want more! To satisfy cravings Maria Yiakoulis and Out of the Blue will continue the festivities the following week on 23 October. Performing their own fusion of modern Australian and traditional Greek music this will be a spectacular event.

Born in Sydney Maria Yiakoulis' musical influences are many; but none stronger than the music of her parents homeland. Australian influences are fused with the

sounds and tempos of Greece to create Yiakoulis' own unique style. Her sultry siren voice epitomizes the world of myth and dreams, taking audiences on an unforgettable musical journey across the cultural landscapes of time, space, place and emotion.

Starting with playing the violin and flute Yiakoulis moved to the world of jazz and blues. Her appetite for expression furthered her exploration through various forms of world music and her performance is richer as a result.

"I don't find it difficult to bridge the two cultures. I am the two cultures and I enjoy the challenge of creating a sound which identifies my generation".

Out of the Blue is led by vocalist, guitarist and baglama player Peter Kalandranis and celebrates the music of his childhood in Patmos, Greece.

Performing with Kalandranis are Thomas Papadimitriou, Dimitri Vouros, Petros Apstolidis, Themistoklis Ioakimidis, Nes Petsalis, Stamatis Valacos, Georgette Giatis, Tony Karagiannakis and Panagiota Bintas. The inspiration for the name of the group was "picking musicians out of the blue, to perform the music of the islands popping out of the deep blue Aegean Sea".

Audiences will love the variety of music on offer, which will transport them to Greece and give them a taste of the rich culture that Sydney is so lucky to have a piece of.

