



# No More Coughing Breathe Easy with Ivy Leaf



Young children are at risk of getting cold and cough during the seasonal changes in weather. About 80% of coughing in children is caused by viral infections or changes in weather.

When children are under the weather, it is difficult for the parent and the whole family. Parent wants their children to feel better quickly and get back on track as soon as possible. When they are not feeling well, it will affect their appetite and nutrient intake indirectly. A continual cough can interfere with their concentration, talking, daily activity and sleep.

Coughing is our body's natural way to protect and clear out irritating materials (e.g. smoke, dust or pollutant) and excess secretions (mucus, sputum, phlegm) from our throat, air passages and lungs. It normally goes away by itself after a few days. However, a persistent cough may indicate an underlying health problem.

## What is causing the cough?

The most common cause of coughing in children is viral infections, which is also known as common cold. Children usually caught the virus when they are in contact with other children who are carrying the infecting virus at school or childcare. Coughing or sneezing can easily spread the infections to others. The virus that cause infections can be in the droplets of moisture that are 'coughed out' during coughing. In Southeast Asia, haze poses a serious and recurring problem every year due to the burning of forests in certain countries to clear land and also due to emission from power stations, industrial activities, traffic pollution as well as farming practices. Children that are constantly exposed to dust or pollutant will

always suffer from coughing and the body will naturally produce more mucus to remove the irritants.

## What is Ivy Leaf?

The medicinal use of ivy leaf (*Hedera helix*) can be traced back to the ancient Greece. This natural ingredient has been used for centuries to support respiratory health. Ivy leaf grows across Europe and into certain part of central and northern Asia.

Among all the herbal medicines used in Germany, ivy leaf is used most frequently, found in 32.2% of all herbal medicines and in 43.9% of mono-herbal medicines. Nearly half of herbal medicines are prescribed by medical doctors, suggesting a certain degree of acceptance among medical doctors.

Ivy leaf has been clinically proven to be effective and safe to treat cold and cough in children. The use of Ivy leaf for the treatment of cough associated with cold has been officially supported by the Herbal Medicinal Product Committee of European Medicines Agency (EMA).

## How does it work?

The main components of ivy leaf that provide the clinical benefits are called saponins. Hederacoside C is the main saponin which further breakdowns into  $\alpha$ -hederin.

The saponins in ivy leaf increase the fluid secretions in the airways which help to liquefy thick mucus in the chest, making it easier to 'cough out'. Another action of ivy leaf that makes it an effective cough remedy is its antispasmodic effect that may help to relax the airway spasms and reduce cough frequency.

### Loosens thick phlegm

Ivy leaf promotes bronchial fluid secretion and reduces the viscosity of mucus

### Reduces severity of cough

Ivy leaf exhibits antibacterial and antiviral actions and reduce cough intensity and frequency



### Relieves irritating cough

Ivy leaf reduces the release of histamine and blocks the inflammation pathway

### Eases breathing

Ivy leaf promotes muscle relaxation in the airways and makes breathing easier

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**References:** (1) Holzinger F, Chenot JF (2011) Systematic review of clinical trials assessing the effectiveness of ivy leaf (*Hedera helix*) for acute upper respiratory tract infections. Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Vol. 2011:382789. (2) Chandra AM. Children and the haze in Singapore. <https://www.healthxchange.sg/children/health-scared-outbreaks/children-haze-singapore> (3) Blumenthal M, Busse W.R et al. (1998) The Complete German Commission E monographs – Therapeutic Guide to Herbal Medicines. Austin: American Botanical Council. (4) Du Y et al. (2014) Use of herbal medicinal products among children and adolescents in Germany. BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine 2014, 14:218. (5) Schmidt M, Thomsen M and Schmidt U (2012) Suitability of Ivy extract for the treatment of paediatric cough. Wiley Online Library, DOI: 10.1002. (6) Runkel F et al. (2005) An article on the mechanism of action of ivy. Pharm. Ztg. – 150, Jahrgang – 27.

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