

USA WEEKEND

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ThinkSmart:
Critical tax advice

Super Bowl parties:
What every
fan should know

Meet *Alpha Dog's*
Emile Hirsch

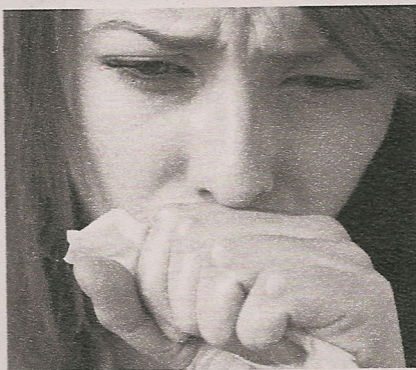
Special
Health
Report

LONG- DISTANCE CARE

As loved ones age, how can
you make sure you're there for them
even though you live in different cities?

For expert solutions, USA WEEKEND
teams with

AARP
The Magazine



CHAD JOHNSTON, MASTERFILE

COUGHS: Adults, they are nothing to scoff at

Thinking about calling the doctor for your cough? Join the crowd. Coughing is the reason behind 30 million office visits each year. And wisely so: Coughs are associated with everything from the common cold to heart disease and acid reflux. Except for occasional episodes that are easily explained (wrong pipe, pungent odor), "it is never normal to cough," says Richard S. Irwin, M.D., University of Massachusetts Medical School professor.

The good news? With the help of revised guidelines from the American College of Chest Physicians, doctors can diagnose and treat 90% of coughs.

Also, the guidelines strongly suggest adults under 65 get an improved vaccine for pertussis (whooping cough).

DECODING YOUR BASIC COUGH

Type: Acute; lasts three weeks or less.

Causes: Most often the common cold (a virus). Also, acute bronchitis (but frequently overdiagnosed).

Don't take: Antibiotics (they don't work on viruses). Over-the-counter cough syrups, expectorants and suppressants (these have only a placebo effect, and coughs due to colds disappear in a few days without treatment).

Do take: If your doctor permits, use old-fashioned antihistamine pills with or without a decongestant (not the "non-drowsy" formula).

Call a doctor: If coughing doesn't improve in seven days or if it's accompanied by shaking, chills, fever or pus. **W**

— Susan T. Lennon

For information on chronic coughs and kids: chestnet.org/patients/guides/cough.php.