



# Medication Safety Tips

Everything you need to know to keep your kids safe around medicine.

Children are curious by nature, and it makes sense that they would be even more curious when it comes to medication. Many medications look and taste like candy. While it's important to encourage our kids to explore and discover new things, when it comes to medication, we want to be careful to keep them safe. Here are a few tips to show you how.

## Store Medicines Safely

- Put medicines up and away and out of sight. Make sure that all medicines, including vitamins and adult medicines, are stored out of reach and out of sight of children. (In 86% of emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the child got into medicine belonging to an adult.)
- Consider places where kids get into medicine. Kids get into medication in all sorts of places, like in purses and nightstands. (In 67% of cases, the medicine was within reach of a child, such as in a purse, left on a counter or dresser or found on the ground.)
- Consider products you might not think about as medicines. Most parents know to store medicine up and away - or at least the products they consider to be medicine. But they don't always think about products such as diaper rash remedies or eye drops, which may not seem like medicine but can cause harm.
- Close your medicine tightly after every use. Buy medicines that come in child-resistant packages when you can. But remember, child-resistant does not mean child-proof, and some children will still be able to get into medicine given enough time and persistence. Make sure you close the package tightly after each use.
- Be alert to visitors' medicine. Well-meaning visitors may not be thinking about the medicines they have brought with them in their belongings. When you have guests in your home, offer to put purses, bags and coats out of reach of children to protect their property from a curious child.



(In 43% of cases, the medicine a child got into belonged to a relative, such as an aunt, uncle or grandparent.)

- Be alert to medicine in places your child visits. You know to store medicine safely in your home, but do you ever think about medicine safety when your child isn't at home? Asking people your child visits to put their medicines in a safe place works for some parents, but it may feel socially awkward to others. Another option is to take a look around to see if any medicines are stored within reach and deal with any risks in sight.
- Even if you are tempted to keep it handy, put medicine out of reach after every use. When you need to give another dose in just a few hours, it may be tempting to keep medicine close at hand. Accidents can happen fast. It only takes a few seconds for children to get into medicine that could make them very sick. Put medicine up and away after every use. And if you need a reminder, set an alarm on your watch or cell phone, or write yourself a note.



**Medications are the leading cause of child poisoning. Every year, more than 67,000 children go to an emergency room for medicine poisoning. That's one child every eight minutes.**



## Give Medicines Safely

- Use the dosing device that comes with the medicine. Proper dosing is important, particularly for young children. Kitchen spoons aren't all the same, and a teaspoon and tablespoon used for cooking won't measure the same amount as the dosing device.
- Keep all medicines in their original packages and containers.
- Take the time to read the label and follow the directions. Even if you have used the medicine before, sometimes the directions change about how much medicine to give.
- Even if your child seems really sick, don't give more medicine than the label says. It won't help your child feel better faster, and it may cause harm.
- Take the time to read the label and follow the directions on your child's medicine. Check the active ingredients listed on the label. Make sure you don't give your child more than one medicine with the same active ingredient. Giving your child two or more medicines that have the same active ingredient can put your child at risk for an overdose.



## Communicate to Caregivers

- If you are depending on someone else to give your child medicine, communicate clearly to avoid double dosing or dosing errors. (More than 67,000 parents call poison control centers about dosing errors each year.)
- Write clear instructions to other caregivers, including what medicine to give, when to give it and the correct dose.

## Get Rid of Medicines Safely

- Many communities have a medicine take-back program. This is an easy way to get rid of your unused or expired medicines.
- To dispose of it yourself, put the medicine into a sealable plastic bag. If the medicine is a solid, such as a pill or liquid capsule, add water to dissolve it. Then add kitty litter, sawdust or coffee grounds to the plastic bag. You can add anything

that mixes with the medicine to make it less appealing for children or pets.

- The Food and Drug Administration ([FDA](#)) says that [certain medicines](#) are so dangerous they should be flushed down the toilet.

## Talk to Your Kids about Medication Safety

- Talk to your kids about medication safety. Even if their medicine tastes good, don't compare it to candy to encourage kids to take it.
- Speak with older kids about the dangers of misusing or abusing prescription or over-the-counter medicines.

## Educate Grandparents

- It is estimated that in 38 percent of ER visits involving a medicine poisoning, the medicine belonged to a grandparent. Talk to grandparents about being extra mindful with medicine or pillboxes when children are around.
- Don't forget to remind other family members and visitors as well.

## Put the Poison Control Center Number in Your Phone

- Put the toll-free number for the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) into your home and cell phone. You should also post it near your phone or on your refrigerator for the babysitter. Hopefully you'll never need it, but it's nice to have just in case.
- Experts are always available to help in case of an emergency or with any questions involving medicines, chemicals or household products. Call the Poison Control Center if you have questions about giving medicines, if your child was given the wrong amount or medicine, or if your child has taken medicine that he or she wasn't supposed to.
- If your child has collapsed, is not breathing, or has a seizure, call 911.
- Do not make children vomit or give them anything unless directed by a professional.

