

Keeping Kids Safe Around Medicine

Did you know? Every year, more than 64,000 children go to an emergency room for medicine poisoning. That's one child every eight minutes. Almost all of these visits are because a child got into medicine during a moment alone. You can keep this from happening to your child by learning how to store, dose and get rid of medicines safely. Here's how:

Store Medicines Safely

- **Put all medicines up and away and out of sight, including your own.**
Make sure that all medicines and vitamins are stored out of reach and out of sight of children. In 86% of emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the child got into adult medicine.
- **Consider places where kids get into medicine.**
Kids get into medication in all sorts of places, like in purses and nightstands. In 67% of emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the medicine was left within reach of the child, such as in a purse, on a counter or dresser, or on the ground. Place purses and bags in high locations, and avoid leaving medicines on a nightstand or dresser.
- **Consider products you might not think about as medicines.**
Most parents store medicine up and away – or at least the products they consider to be medicine. They may not think about products such as diaper rash remedies, vitamins or eye drops as medicine, but they actually are and need to be stored safely.
- **Be alert to visitors' medicine. Guests in your home may not be thinking about medicine they brought with them in their belongings.**
In 43% of emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the medicine a child got into belonged to a relative, such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle. 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.
- **Close your medicine caps tightly after every use.**
Buy medicines in child-resistant packages when you can. But remember, child-resistant does not mean child-proof, and some children will still be able to gain access to medicine given enough time and persistence.
- **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. But accidents can happen fast, and 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.

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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 or tablespoon used for cooking won't measure the same amount as the dosing device. Use the dosing device that comes with the medicine to prevent dosing errors.

- **Read the label and know what's in the medicine.**

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, because it puts your child at risk for an overdose.

- **Communicate with caregivers.**

If you are depending on someone else to give your child medicine, communicate clearly to avoid double dosing or dosing errors. More than 64,000 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 Medicine Safely

- **Clean out your medicine cabinet.**

Reduce the risk of kids getting into medicine by getting rid of unused or expired medicine. 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, pour the medicine into a sealable plastic bag. If the medicine is a pill, 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.

Keep Help Handy

- **Put the Poison Help Number into your home and cell phones: 1-800-222-1222.**

You can also put the number on your refrigerator or another place in your home where babysitters and caregivers can see it. And remember, the Poison Help Number is not just for emergencies, you can call with questions about how to take or give medicine.

- **Download the Kids' Wellness Tracker app to your phone or tablet.**

It will help you track your child's medicine and calculate dosing. It also tracks height, weight, BMI, vaccines and symptoms.



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Visit [SafeKids.org](https://www.SafeKids.org) for more tips on keeping kids safe around medicine.