

# Medication Safety for Parents



Thousands of children are evaluated in emergency rooms every year due to poisoning, most commonly caused by unintentional ingestion of medication.<sup>1</sup> Medication ingestions can have life-threatening consequences, especially in young children.<sup>2</sup> Medications for children are based on weight, so just one or two pills of certain adult medications can cause death in babies and young children.<sup>3</sup>

Several factors lead to unintentional medication ingestion, including the improper storage of medication. Young children are developmentally curious and often will put things that they find on the floor or drawers in their mouths. Additionally, children are often unable to tell the difference between medication and candy, leading to ingestion<sup>4</sup>. It is important children take medication only under the supervision of a trusted adult in order to prevent dangerous medication misuse.

Check with your pediatrician about any concepts you may be confused or unsure about.

## Safe Storage

- Keep all medication **out of sight and out of reach** of your child. Even with a safety cap, no medication is fully childproof.
- All over-the-counter and prescription medicines should be stored in their original packages in locked cabinets or containers.
- Consider using a lockbox or safe to store all medications.
- Immediately return medication to safe, locked storage after using them. Do not leave children alone with medication.

## Taking and Giving Medicine

- Do not refer to medicine as “candy.” This can tempt your child to try other pills when you’re not watching.
- Be sure to check the correct dosage for your child. This is often different from the adult dose. Measure it out exactly.

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<sup>1</sup> Emergency Department Visits Involving the Accidental Ingestion of Opioid Pain Relievers by Children

<sup>2</sup> Poisoning - World Report on Child Injury Prevention

<sup>3</sup> Medication Safety Tips for Families - HealthyChildren.org

<sup>4</sup> Candy or Medicine: Can Children Tell the Difference?

- For liquid medication, use a medicine syringe or dropper to measure the correct dosage. Do not use kitchen utensils to measure medicine.
- Give the medicine at the times you are supposed to, based on the prescription or doctor's instructions.

## Other Tips

- Avoid giving your child unnecessary medication. Check with your pediatrician to see when medication may be needed if you are unsure.
- Safely discard of all unused medications. Check the bottle or container for disposal instructions.
- Ask your pediatrician or pharmacist for specific instructions on giving prescription medication to your child. It is always better to ask questions than to give your child medicine incorrectly.

## Additional Resources



Candy or Medicine? Keep Kids Safe and Prevent Tragic Accidents



Medication Safety Tips for Families



Poison Prevention: One Pill Can Kill