

## Medicine Safety

Many children need medicine from time to time to treat different illnesses or conditions. Some of these medicines are taken for a short time. Others may be taken for years. Here are some tips for the safe use of medicines.

- Use a child-proof cap, and **RE-LOCK** the cap after each use. Be careful with medicines and vitamins that have iron in them. They are a major cause of poisoning deaths in children.
- Keep medicine and vitamins out of the sight and reach of children. It only takes a moment for a child to grab and swallow medicines. Remember, places that a 10-month-old cannot reach, a one-year-old can. If possible, lock up all medicines.
- If you have visitors in your home, remind them to store their medicines out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Even over-the-counter medicines can be dangerous. Be sure to keep them in a safe place.
- Do not share medicine. Never give one child's medicine to someone else. Never give a child medicine that has been prescribed for someone else.
- Be sure to check the label on the medicine for proper storage. The bathroom is not a good place to keep medicine because it gets too hot and humid.
- A regular teaspoon or tablespoon is not a good way to measure medicine. Ask your pharmacist for an oral syringe or a pediatric measuring device and how to use it. You can also ask the pharmacist to mark on the oral syringe how much to give your child.
- Keep an up-to-date list of your child's medicines with you at all times. Other caregivers should have the list too. The list should include prescription medicine, over-the-counter medicine, herbal products and dietary supplements. This list can be very useful in case of an emergency.
- Have all prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy. This helps the pharmacist to check for drug interactions.
- Tell your child's doctor about medicines your child takes that were prescribed by a different doctor.

*Continued on page 2*

- If you have any questions about your child's medicine, call your child's doctor or ask the pharmacist.
- Talk to your child's doctor or pharmacist before giving two medicines at the same time.
- Always read the information sheet that comes with the medicine.
- If you notice anything different about your child's medicine, tell the pharmacist.

## Preventing Medicine Mistakes

Deaths from medicine mistakes happen every day. These deaths can be caused by taking medicine for the wrong reasons, taking medicine prescribed for someone else or taking the wrong amount of medicine. Here are some tips for preventing mistakes:

- Give medicine only to the person for whom it was prescribed.
- Know what is in the medicine your child is taking.
- Always turn on the light when giving or taking medicine. Also, do not store ointments or creams beside toothpaste where an easy mix-up could occur.
- Read the label when you take or give medicine. Take time to double-check the dosage, time of day and person for whom it was prescribed.
- Keep medicine in the bottle it came in. Keep the label on the bottle. You can also organize medicine in a pill box or pill reminder container.
- If you need to give medicine regularly to your child, have only one parent or caregiver give the medicine. It may be helpful to write down when you gave the medicine, so you don't give too much.
- Give the amount of medicine to your child that your child's doctor told you to give - do not give extra! If you have any questions about this, call your child's doctor.
- Count your own medicine and your child's medicine. This will let you know if anyone else is taking it.
- Keep the **Poison Center phone number, 1-800-222-1222**, where it is easy to see (TTY 1-866-688-0088).

## Questions to Ask the Doctor and Pharmacist

- What is this medicine?
- What is this medicine being used for?
- How should my child take this medicine?
- What are common side effects for this medicine?



*Continued on Page 3*

## Questions to Ask the Doctor and Pharmacist, continued

- What should I do if my child misses a scheduled dose of this medicine?
- What steps do I need to take to get more medicine when this supply runs out?
- What should I do if my child vomits or spits out his medicine?
- Could this medicine be abused?

## Steps to Discourage Abuse

The home medicine cabinet is one of the easiest places for children to get drugs. You can reduce this risk by using these steps:

- **Monitor**
  - Count your child's medicine.
  - Control your child's medicine.
  - Ask the pharmacist if any of the medicine your child is taking could be abused.
- **Secure**
  - Keep all medicine, including over-the-counter medicine, in a locked cabinet or other safe place that your child cannot get into.
- **Dispose**
  - When the medicine is no longer needed, read the label or call the pharmacy to find out how to get rid of the leftover medicine.
  - To protect your privacy and prevent illegal refills, remove labels on the medicine container before you throw it out.
- **Talk to your child**
  - When you talk to your child about drug use, include prescription medicines.
  - Talk to your family members, especially teenagers, about the dangers of taking and mixing medicines. Even though medicine is given for health reasons, taking too much or mixing certain medicines with other medicines, can be deadly. If you do not know what the risks are, ask a doctor or pharmacist.
  - Stay calm when discussing issues with your child.

**See *Questions to ask the doctor*, page 4**

**Questions to ask the doctor**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Other Helping Hands**

*Proper Disposal of Medicine, HH-V-228*

*Poisonings and Poison Prevention, HH-IV-30*

*Medication Record Instructions, HH-V-1*

*Medication Record Form, HH-V-108*

*Medications: How to Give by Mouth, HH-V-281*