



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S

When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Safe Handling of Hazardous Medicines in the Home

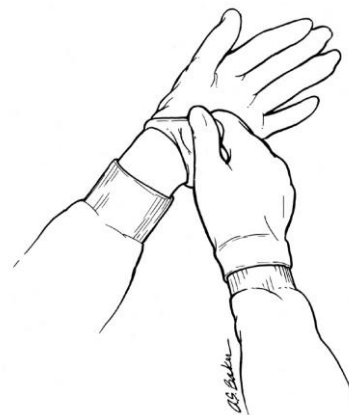
Some medicines need special handling because they can be hazardous (harmful) to the people giving them. This is because some studies show that people who care for patients taking these special medicines can also have changes within their own body's cells. These changes can be avoided by following certain steps. Exposure can occur from spills, splashes, breathing in the medicine's vapors or powder, and from coming in contact with the patient's vomit, urine or stool.

The medicine that needs safe handling is:

The risk of danger from handling small amounts of these hazardous medicines is small, but it is a good idea to avoid exposure if possible. Here are suggestions for things you can do at home to limit exposure.

Supplies you may need

- Disposable gloves (Picture 1) – Get them from your local pharmacy or the Nationwide Children's Hospital Homecare Retail Store.
- Disposable gown – if you are handling liquid medicines
- Household soap or detergent – any brand can be used for cleaning
- Disposable towel – in case of an accidental spill
- Two-ply, heavy duty trash bag – for used supplies
- Disposable plastic medicine cups and oral syringes – depending on what kind of medicine is being taken
- Needle disposal or "sharps" container – needed if you are handling injectable (given by needle or IV) medicines



Picture 1 Putting on disposable gloves.

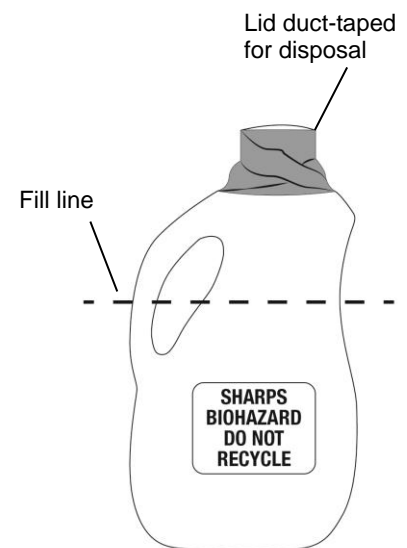
Safety measures for handling hazardous medicines

- Wash your hands **before and after** handling hazardous medicines.
- Use disposable gloves if you are touching any type of hazardous medicine. Do not use torn or punctured gloves.
- Use disposable plastic medicine cups to move a pill from a medicine bottle.
- Throw away any used gloves, gowns, medicine cups, oral syringes, or bottles in a two-ply, heavy-duty trash bag. Tie or seal the plastic bag and place it in your household trash bag for disposal. Be sure to keep this trash out of the reach of pets and children.
- If you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, you should not handle hazardous medicines. If you are the primary caregiver, speak to your nurse, doctor, or pharmacist about safe ways to care for the patient.

Handling hazardous medicines at home – needles and sharps

- Do not recap the used needle. Do not bend or break off the needle.
- Do not remove the needle from the syringe.
- All sharps or needles must be thrown away in a safe ‘sharps container.’ If you do not have a hospital-issued sharps container, use a container made of **heavy-duty plastic**. **This can be a laundry detergent bottle or liquid laundry softener bottle (Picture 2).** It must close with a lid that screws on tightly. Needles should not be able to poke through (puncture) the lid. The container must be leak-proof, and able to sit up and not fall over (stable).

- Place the container in the middle of a full, heavy duty trash bag. In the state of Ohio, you are allowed to put the trash bag out for regular trash pick-up. **DO NOT** put the container in the recycling.
- Please ask your nurse for Helping Hand HH-IV-168, *Sharps Containers at Home* for more information or you can find the Helping Hand at <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/health-wellness-and-safety-resources/helping-hands/sharps-containers-at-home>



Picture 2 Hard plastic laundry detergent bottle and fill line.

Storing hazardous medicines

- Your pharmacist or nurse will tell you if there are any special storage instructions.
- Keep all drugs out of reach of children or pets.
- Keep hazardous medicines separate from all other medicines.
- If the medicine needs to be refrigerated, separate it from other foods. Use a separate bin in the refrigerator or place the medicine in a container.
- Keep the hazardous medicine in its original bottle or container. Do not place it in a pill box with other non-hazardous medicines.

Taking hazardous medicines

- Your physician, nurse, or pharmacist will explain to you how and when to take your medicine.
- It is important for you to take these drugs exactly as told. Do not skip a dose without discussing it with your physician.
- If you forget to take a dose, do not take double the dose the next time. Contact your physician's office or pharmacist to discuss what to do if this happens.

Accidental hazardous medicine spills

- If you are taking a hazardous medicine and it spills, wear a disposable gown and two pairs of gloves to clean up the spill. Cover the spill with a disposable towel, and then thoroughly wipe up the spill. The area should then be cleaned three times with a home cleaning product. This is to make sure that no medicine is left on the surface. All materials should be thrown away in a heavy-duty sealed trash bag and placed in a trash can that is out of reach of pets and children.
- Hazardous liquid medicines spilled on your skin may cause irritation. Wash the area well with soap and water and dry. If redness or irritation occurs within 7 days, contact your doctor.
- If the drug splashes in the eye, rinse the eye with tap water for at least 15 minutes and contact your doctor.

During clinic visits, be sure to tell the staff about any hazardous drugs you may have taken at home. If you have any other questions or concerns, ask your child's doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.