

Keeping Kids Safe Around Medicine

What you need to know: Every year, more than 67,000 children go to an emergency room for medicine poisoning. That's one child every eight minutes. Almost all of these visits are because the child got into medicine while their parent or caregiver wasn't looking. 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 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 actually are.
- **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.)
- **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.
- **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.



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Give Medicines Safely

- **Use the dosing device that comes with the medicine.**
Proper dosing is important, particularly for young children. Use the dosing device that comes with the medicine. 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.
- **Read the label and know what's in the medication.**
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 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 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 Medicine Safely

- **Clean out your medicine cabinet.**
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.
- **Put the Poison Control Center 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.

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