



# Safety with medicines

## Patient and Family Education

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When your child is ill, medicines can help him get better. But they can also hurt him if you don't use them correctly. Your doctor or pharmacist can help you give your child medicines safely. Before using any medicine, be sure to follow the safety tips in this teaching sheet.

### **What should I know about my child's medicines?**

Ask your child's doctor or pharmacist if you have questions about your child's medicine or how to give it. Ask your child's doctor, nurse or pharmacist to write down things that you need to know for each medicine your child takes. Each time that you give a medicine to your child, read the label three times to avoid mistakes.

### **Know about the medicine, including:**

- The name – both generic and brand names when needed
- What it's used for and why your child takes it
- Common and important side effects
- How to store it. Some medicines need to be kept in the refrigerator.
- When to finish your child's prescribed dose and the medicine's expiration date. Throw away all medicines after this. Follow the advice on the medicine label or ask your pharmacist how to dispose of them.

### **Know how to give the right dose of the right medicine at the right time. This includes:**

- How much to give your child (the right dose)
- How to give it, such as by mouth or into the eyes or ears
- How often to give it
- What times to give it
- How long your child should take it
- How much your child weighs. The dose of many medicines is based on weight.

### **Know what to do about foods, drinks and other medicines, including:**

- Whether you give the medicine with or without food. If the label says to give the medicine on an empty stomach, give it 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal.

### **In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.**

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.

## Safety with medicines, continued

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- What foods, drinks or other medicines your child should avoid while taking this medicine. This includes over-the-counter medicines, herbs and supplements.
- If you can mix the medicine with any liquid or food. Ask your child's doctor or your pharmacist.
  - Some medicines may be mixed with a small amount of liquid (such as formula or milk) or soft food (such as applesauce or pudding) to mask the taste.
  - Use only a small amount (one or two teaspoons) of liquid or food to make sure your child takes all the medicine.
- If you can mix medicines together.

### Know about these safety tips for your child

- Raise your child's head and shoulders to help prevent choking.
- Watch to make sure your child takes the entire dose.
- Keep all medicines in their labeled container where your child cannot get to them. If possible, store them in a locked cupboard.
- Never give your child anyone else's medicine.
- If your child is in daycare or school, let your child's teacher and school nurse know that your child is taking medicine.
- Teach your child that medicines are **NOT** candy. Do not call medicine patches stickers or tattoos.
- Teach your child not to share his medicines with others. This includes medicine patches.
- As your child gets older, teach him about the medicine that he takes. Help him as he begins to take his medicines by himself.

### Giving liquid medicines

- Shake liquid medicines for 30 seconds if the label tells you to do so.
- **Do not** use kitchen spoons to measure your child's medicine. Use a pediatric measuring device such as an oral syringe or dropper. You can buy these items at your drug store.

### Giving tablets and capsules

- Do not crush any tablet or open any capsule unless your child's doctor or pharmacist says it is OK.
- You may crush some tablets and then mix them with a small amount of liquid or food. You can crush tablets between two spoons or a spoon and a piece of wax paper. You can also buy pill splitters and crushers at the drug store.
- You may open some capsules so that the medicine in them can be added to a small amount of liquid or food.
- If you add a crushed tablet or the contents of a capsule to food or liquid, make sure that your child eats or drinks the mixture as soon as it is mixed.

## Safety with medicines, continued

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### Know what to do if problems occur

- What to do if your child vomits after taking the medicine. Check with your child's doctor. Some medicines are OK to give again and some are not.
- Not to give extra doses or skip doses. If you forget a dose, give it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose but do not give two doses at the same time. If you aren't sure whether to give the forgotten dose or skip it, call your child's doctor or pharmacist.

### Know what to do about over-the-counter medicines

- Check the type, strength, and dose of the medicine carefully. These medicines come in different forms and strengths.
- Use only the measuring device that comes with the medicine.
- Don't confuse teaspoons (tsp) and tablespoons (tbsp).
- Look at the active ingredients section on the medicine label. Do not use two medicines at the same time that contain the same active ingredient.
- Do not use cough and cold medicines for children under the age of six unless your doctor tells you to.
- Check with your child's doctor or pharmacist before giving any over-the-counter medicines, herbs or supplements with any other prescription medicines.

### Know how to check medicines at the drug store

- Make sure the medicine is for your child and is the correct medicine.
- Make sure you can read the label and understand the directions. Ask if you have any questions.
- If your child's medicine looks different than what he had before, ask the pharmacist to double check.

### Know who to call if problems occur

- For routine questions or concerns about medicines, such as questions about the dose or side effects, call your child's doctor or your local pharmacist.
- Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room **right away** if your child shows signs of severe allergic reaction such as hives, swelling of his mouth, eyes or face, breathing problems, wheezing, chest tightness or feelings of faintness or if you have an urgent concern or emergency.
- Call the Georgia Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222 or call 911 at once if your child takes too much medicine or has a bad reaction to his medicine.

# Safety with medicines, continued

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## My Child's Medicine Record

Use this medicine record to help you keep track of your child's medicines. Ask your child's nurse, doctor or pharmacist to help you fill it out.

- Include prescription and over-the-counter medicines, herbs and supplements.
- For each medicine, write down how much your child takes and how often he takes it.
- Include the name and phone number of the pharmacy where you get your child's medicines.
- Make sure that all of your child's doctors and dentists have a current and complete list. Update the list as often as needed.
- **List any allergies that your child has to medicines or foods. Make sure your child's doctor, dentist and pharmacist know about these allergies.**

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

My child's allergies \_\_\_\_\_

My child's doctor's name and phone number \_\_\_\_\_

My drug store name and phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Strength of medicine	What it is used for	How my child takes it (By mouth or other ways)	My child's dose	How many times a day my child takes it	Special instructions