Medication Safety for Kids

Top Medicine Safety Tips for Parents

- **Put all medicines up and away and out of sight including your own.** Make sure that all medicines and vitamins are stored out of reach and out of sight of children. In 3 out of 4 emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the child got into medicine belonging to a parent or grandparent.

- **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. But accidents can happen fast, and 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.

- **Talk to your kids about medication safety.** Even if their medication tastes good, don't compare it to candy to encourage kids to take it. Tablets and syrup that your children take at this stage taste sweet and can look a lot like candy.

- **Close your caps medicine tightly after every use.** Buy medicines 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.

- **Store medications in a cool, dry area** (and in the fridge if instructed by your physician/pharmacist). Usually we store medications in the bathroom or a medicine cabinet, but the heat/humidity can decrease the effectiveness and shelf-life of medications. This is also usually an area where children might have easy access.

- **Educate grandparents.** It is estimated that in 38% of ER visits involving a medicine poisoning, the medicine belonged to a grandparent. Talk to grandparents about being extra mindful with medicine or pillboxes when children are around.

- **Educate babysitters, teachers and other caretakers of any allergies that your child may have.** If your child has any serious allergies it’s important to make sure they have the necessary medication on hand to handle an allergic episode immediately. This may include having your children carry an epi-pen if they have a peanut allergy and letting their school know of their allergy.

Prepared by the Phi Delta Chi Pharmacy Fraternity
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• **Consider places where kids get into medicine.** Kids get into medication in all sorts of places, like in purses and nightstands. In 67% of emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the medicine was left within reach of a child, such as in a purse, on a counter or dresser, or on the ground. Place purses and bags in high locations, and avoid leaving medicines on a nightstand or dresser.

• **Be alert to visitors' medicine.** Guests in your home may not be thinking about the medicine they brought with them in their belongings. In 43% of emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the medicine a child got into belonged to a relative, such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle. 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.

• **Give the proper dose.** If possible, it is always more appropriate to dose by your child’s weight as opposed to age, especially with infants.

• **Use the dosing device that comes with the medicine.** Proper dosing is important, particularly for young children. 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. Your local pharmacy is a good place to pick up a dosing device when you pick up your children’s medicine. It’s usually free as well!

• **Your local pharmacist is a great source for questions you have about your medicines (and we love to answer questions!)** When you go to pick up prescriptions always let your pharmacist know if you’re taking any over the counter medicines in case they may react with the prescriptions that you’re currently on! They can also help you dose medications for young children and assist you in picking the best medications to care for a sick child.