SAFETY MATTERS

Pediatric Medication Guide

This counseling tool has been jointly developed by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners.

This flipchart is supported by an educational grant from McNeil Consumer Healthcare.
SAFETY MATTERS
Pediatric Medication Safety

American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
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This educational material was jointly developed by
the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners • www.aanp.org
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This flipchart is supported by an educational grant from McNeil Consumer Healthcare.
**Healthcare Provider:** Please use this table of contents to determine which sections of this educational tool to share with your patient.

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Giving the Right Medicine to Your Child

• Give only medicines made for children
• Children are not ‘small’ adults
• Their bodies are less developed
• Adult medicines given to child could:
  —Affect child differently
  —Cause life-threatening side effects
Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider

- What is this medicine for?
- How much do I give and how often?
- What are the possible side effects?
- What are the signs of allergic reaction?
- How do I know if the medicine is working?
- When will I know if the medicine is working?
- When do I stop giving the medicine?
- Can I give with their other medicines, vitamins, supplements, or herbs?
General Tips for Safe Use of Medicines

• Use only medicines made for children
• Store medicine out of child’s reach in original bottle
• Carefully read medicine label to learn:
  — How much to give
  — How often to give
  — How to give such as with or without food
• Know child’s weight; doses are often weight-based
• Know the names of all medicines your child takes
• Don’t stop medicines earlier than instructed
• Don’t give child other people’s medicines
• Tell children what medicine is and why an adult must give it
• Never call medicines ‘candy’
• Never use longer or give higher dose unless told to by healthcare provider
• ASK healthcare provider or pharmacist any questions about your child’s medicines
• Review all medicines, vitamins, minerals, supplements, and herbs at every visit
• Reading label is most important part of giving medicine to your child

• Labels tell you:
  — Name of medicine
  — When and how to take
  — Pharmacy name, address and phone number
  — Name of healthcare provider
  — Name of person who is to take medicine
  — Number of refills
  — Prescription number
  — Date ordered
  — Expiration date

• Don’t give **ANY** medicine after expiration date
Over-the-counter Medicine Labels

• Labels tell you:
  — Active ingredient: healing substance in the medicine
  — Uses: symptoms or illness the medicine will treat or prevent
  — Warnings:
    • When not to take
    • When to call healthcare provider
    • Possible side effects
    • Possible interactions with foods, drinks, or other medicines
    • When to stop taking
  — Purpose: type of medicine such as antacid or antibiotic
  — Directions about taking medicine such as:
    • Age
    • How much
    • When
    • How often
    • How long
  — How to store
  — Other ingredients
  — Inactive ingredients such as:
    • Coloring
    • Flavors
Over-the-counter Medicines Not to Give Your Child

• Do not give your child the following unless advised by your healthcare provider
  • Aspirin, even baby aspirin
    —Can cause Reye’s syndrome, a life-threatening illness
  • Cough medicines
    —Can cause hallucinations or make some conditions worse
  • Cold medicines for children under 4 to 6 years
    —Can cause fast heart rate or convulsions
  • Medicines for diarrhea
    —Can be life-threatening or make some conditions worse
  • Medicines for nausea
    —Can make some conditions worse
Over-the-counter Medicines Not to Give Your Child

• Do not give your child the following unless advised by your healthcare provider
  • Medicines to make child fall asleep
  • Constipation medicines
  • Ibuprofen for children under 6 months
  • Expectorants (mucous-thinner)
  • Oral or nose spray decongestants
  • Steroid creams in the diaper area and on the face
  • Herbal supplements without asking health care provider
  • Antibiotic creams on small cuts and scrapes
  • Teething medicines
Safe Use of Liquid Acetaminophen

- Many different brands of acetaminophen
- Important to give correct dose for child’s weight
- **CONCENTRATIONS OF ACETAMINOPHEN NOW CHANGED**
  - Old and new concentrations may still be in stores and homes including:
    - 160 mg/5 mL (less strong)
    - 80 mg/0.8 mL or 80 mg/1 mL (stronger)
- Check Active Ingredient section on drug label to:
  - Learn strength
  - Identify correct dose
  - Avoid multi-dosing
- Different dosing devices for different strengths
- Use **ONLY** dosing device that comes with the medicine
- If child is under 2 years, be sure to ask healthcare provider about correct dose
- If fever lasts longer than 72 hours or does not come down with correct dose, call healthcare provider
- Don’t give more than 5 doses in 24 hours
Vitamins and Minerals

• Ask healthcare provider if your child needs vitamins and minerals
• Food provides enough vitamins and minerals for most children
• Large amounts of vitamins and minerals can be dangerous
• Many common foods have added vitamins and minerals
• If advised to give child vitamins or minerals:
  —Choose kind made for child’s age
  —Store out of child’s reach
  —Teach child they are not candy
  —Don’t use as replacement for healthy foods
• Ask healthcare provider **BEFORE** giving alternative or complementary health treatments
• Give updated list of child’s vitamins, minerals, supplements, herbs, and alternative health treatments to healthcare provider at each visit
Measuring Doses

• Make sure you give the correct dose by using:
  — Medicine syringe or dropper
• Pull up medicine level even with prescribed dose
  — Medicine spoon
  — Medicine cup
• Place cup on a flat surface to measure dose into cup
• Be sure you use correct measurement unit (teaspoon vs milliliters [mL])
• Make sure child finishes ALL medicine
• Do not use kitchen spoons because they don’t give accurate measurement
• Know the difference between a tablespoon (TBSP) and a teaspoon (TSP)
  — Tablespoon holds 3 times more medicine than teaspoon
**Giving Different Types of Medicine to Your Child**

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Tablets and Capsules</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Swallow whole with at least 4 ounces of water</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask healthcare provider or pharmacist if can take with certain foods, juices, or milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Some medicines should be taken on empty stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>NEVER</strong> open, crush, chew, or cut pills, tablets, or capsules <strong>UNLESS</strong> healthcare provider says okay to do so</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Liquids by Mouth</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Shake bottle well</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Measure right amount with oral syringe, medicine cup, or spoon</td>
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<tr>
<td>• If using syringe, put tip by inside of cheek and push plunger in slowly to give child time to swallow</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Powders and Granules</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Can be mixed with food or liquids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask healthcare provider or pharmacist about foods and drinks that can safely be mixed with powders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sprinkle powder or granules in small amount of soft food</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Chewable Tablets</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Make sure child chews and swallows all medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drink at least 4 ounces water, milk, or juice after swallowing</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Dissolving Tablets</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Allow to dissolve on tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drink at least 4 ounces water, milk, or juice after swallowing</td>
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# Giving Different Types of Medicine to Your Child

## Rectal Medicines (Suppositories)
- Unwrap medicine
- Can use lubricating gel to help slide in easier
- Child should lie on side or chest
- Hold one buttock (cheek) to one side to see anus
- Put rounded end close to anus
- Gently push in about ½ inch (1 cm) inch with one finger
- Must **NOT** be taken by mouth

## Eye Drops and Ointments
- Always wash your hands before and after
- Shake bottle for drops
- Use only in affected eye
- In smaller children and babies:
  - Have them lie down
  - Place drop(s) in corner of eye
- For older children:
  - Gently pull lower lid out
  - Squeeze bottle gently
  - Have child keep eye shut for about 5 seconds
  - Blink several times to help medicine dissolve/absorb

## Ear Drops
- Shake bottle
- Use only in affected ear
- Have child tilt head or lie down
- Squeeze right number of drops in ear
- Gently pull on ear lobe to help drops go in ear
- Have child keep head tilted to side for few minutes
Tips for Infants

• Hold baby at 45-degree angle while supporting head
• Give medicine with a:
  — Plastic syringe
  — Medicine dropper
• Drop medicine in side of the mouth
• Don’t squirt medicine down back of mouth or throat since this can cause choking
• Follow with breast milk or formula
• Do not put medicine in cup or bottle
Tips for Toddlers and Preschoolers

• Lessen bad taste by:
  —Asking pharmacist to add flavor to medicine
  —Giving popsicle or cold drink to numb taste buds

• Do not put medicine in cup or bottle

• Be firm about need to take medicine

• Never threaten child with medicine for bad behavior

• Talk with healthcare provider about ways to help child who won’t take medicine
Tips for School-aged Children

• Let child take it by themselves while you watch
• Use a star chart to reward them
• If pills are prescribed, teach child to take by:
  —Drinking through a straw
  —Cutting pill in half or quarters after healthcare provider or pharmacist says it is safe to do so
Drug Allergies

- Drug allergy is a reaction to a medicine
  - Most allergic reactions cause mild symptoms
  - Some allergic reactions can be serious
- Call healthcare provider or go to emergency room right away if you think child is allergic
- Have child carry card or wear medicine alert bracelet saying they have drug allergy
Side Effects

- Unwanted effects may occur with medicines
- Read information that comes with medicine package to learn of possible side effects
- Ask healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about possible side effects
Safe Medicine Storage

- Store out of child's reach and sight
- Store at recommended temperature
- Put medicines away after each use
- Hear the click to be sure child-proof cap is locked
- Teach medicine safety to children
- Ask family member and guests to keep their medicines:—Up, away, and out of sight
Safe Medicine Disposal

- Dispose if expired including:
  - Prescriptions
  - Over-the-counter medicines
  - Vitamins and minerals
  - Supplements
  - Herbs

- Safely get rid of all expired, unwanted, and unused medicines by taking to a drug take-back program in your community

- If no drug take-back program
  - Following disposal instructions on label
  - Don’t flush down toilet unless product information tells you to do so
  - Mix medicines with liquid soap, kitty litter, or used coffee grounds
  - Put mixture in sealed container or bag and throw in trash
  - Take label off before throwing away to protect health information
Tips for Traveling

• All prescription bottles and packages should be clearly labeled
• Carry a list of all daily medicines and doses
• Carry the phone number of your pharmacy
• Take a little extra medicine in case:
  —Trip is longer than expected
  —Medicine is spilled, lost, or stolen
• Pack medicine in carry-on bags rather than suitcases
Missed Doses

• If you miss a dose:
  —Give missed dose as soon as you remember **UNLESS** it is nearly time to give next dose, skip the missed dose
  —Don’t double next dose
  —Ask healthcare provider if you miss several doses

• Set up plan to help remember to give medicine:
  —Give medicine when child does a usual daily activity such as after brushing teeth
  —Set an alarm as a reminder of time to give next dose
Antibiotic Tips

• Only kills bacteria and doesn’t work on viruses
  —A cold is a virus
• Finish all antibiotics as told by your healthcare provider
• Never borrow from other people
• Don’t save leftover antibiotics
• Store at correct temperature
  —Ask if should be stored in refrigerator or not
• Ask about interactions with other medicines
• Call healthcare provider if child:
  —Develops rash
  —Has lots of diarrhea (7 to 8 times per day)
  —Does not get better in 48 or 72 hours
Tips for Children Taking Daily Medicines

• Never stop unless healthcare provider tells you to do so
• Always tell healthcare provider and pharmacist about daily medicines
• Always talk with healthcare provider or pharmacist before starting over-the-counter medicine
• Try to take at same time every day
• Be sure to refill before running out
• Have plan to make sure you have medicine in case of emergency or disaster
Special Situations for Handling Medicines

- Working with school or daycare
- Caregivers living apart
- When your child throws up after taking medicine
- Lost or spilled medicines
- Concerns about cost