



Medicine Safety: Safe Storage



What You Need to Know

Each year, more than 60,000 children ages 5 and under are treated in emergency departments due to accidental medication exposure or overdose. An astounding 95% of these visits are because a child got into medicines while the parent or caregiver was not looking. Parents can prevent this by storing all medications locked up and away and out of sight – even vitamins or medicines you take every day. Safe Kids also urges adults to store a child’s medicines in a safe location every time, even if the child will need another dose soon. Ask a visiting grandmother to put her purse with her pillboxes on a high shelf in a closet and to keep medications safely stored in her own home as well. Many medications are made to look and taste like food or [candy](#), making safe storage all the more important.

Safety Tips

- Always store medicines and vitamins in a locked location, out of the reach and sight of children.
- Always put medicines and vitamins away after every use. Never leave them on the counter between dosings. Don’t be tempted to “keep them handy” in a purse, backpack, or briefcase, or in an unlocked cabinet or a drawer within a child’s reach.
- Buy child-resistant packages when available and securely close them every time.
- Remind babysitters, houseguests, and visitors to keep purses and bags that contain medicine up and away when they visit your home.
- Never leave any medicines out or on a counter.
- Program the poison control center number – 1-800-222-1222 – into your home and cell phones so you have it when you need it.
- To help remember to take your medicines or vitamins when they are no longer out in plain view, use the following tips from the CDC’s *Up and Away and Out of Sight* program:
 - Write a note to yourself, and put the note somewhere you will see it: examples include the family bulletin board, refrigerator, bathroom mirror, or next to your keys.
 - Set a daily reminder for yourself. For example, you could send yourself an e-mail or set the alarm on your watch or cell phone.
 - Take your medicines or vitamins at the same time every day, if possible.
 - Use a medicine log to keep track each time you take or give medicine.

Resources

- Safe Kids [Medication Safety Guide](#)
- CDC [Up and Away](#) Home Page
- CDC [Up and Away Poster](#)
- CDC [Up and Away Brochure](#)
- [CDC Medication Safety Page](#)
- [Choose Your Poison](#) website – California Poison Control System’s “Pills Versus Candy” quiz
- iPhone and Android App – Choose Your Poison (California Poison Control System)



Medicine Safety: Safe Dosing



What You Need to Know

Overdosing is preventable! Dosing and medication instructions change – parents and caregivers must be vigilant in reading labels and instructions every time a child needs a dose. And, to help ensure proper dosage, adults must always use the dosing device that comes with the product when giving medicine to children.

Safety Tips

- Always read and follow the label when giving medicines to children. If your child's medication does not have dosing information or instructs you to call a doctor for the dose, be sure that the doctor knows the exact product you are trying to use, because dosing differs among products.
- Only use the dosing device packaged with the medications. Never use a household utensil, such as a teaspoon or tablespoon, to measure medicine.
- Never give your child multiple medicines with the same active ingredient.
- Wait the appropriate period of time between doses.
- Don't increase the dosage because your child seems sicker.
- Never give adult medications to children.
- Never call medicine candy or tell children it tastes like candy.
- Avoid confusion by keeping all medicines in their original packages and containers.
- If the medicine's container doesn't have a label or the label isn't legible, don't use it and [dispose of it safely](#).
- Do not take medicine or vitamins in front of kids, or involve children as helpers with dispensing medication.
- Tell grandparents and other caregivers about safe dosing practices.
- Program the poison control center number – 1-800-222-1222 – into your home and cell phones so you have it when you need it.

Resources

- Safe Kids [Medication Safety Guide](#)
- Safe Kids [My Safe Home](#) – Helps families detect dangers in their home and identify simple steps to fix them.
- Safe Kids [Poison Prevention Game](#) for parents and kids
- [CDC Medication Safety](#)
- [Poison Prevention For Families With Children With Special Needs](#)
- [Poison Control Center Locations and Contact Information](#)



Medicine Safety: Safe Disposal



What You Need to Know

When medications are out of date or not needed anymore, it's important to get them out and away. But how? We have been taught over the years to flush them down the toilet, but that is no longer recommended because it can pollute our water supply (there are some exceptions, described below). The best way to dispose of prescription or over the counter medications is to participate in your community's medication Take-Back Program.

Take-Back Initiatives

- Check for approved U.S. state and local collection alternatives such as community-based household hazardous waste collection programs.
- Participate in the DEA National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on Saturday April 28, 2012. Visit the [National Take-Back Initiative](#) site for more information. The third National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on October 29, 2011, turned in more than 377,086 pounds (188.5 tons) of unwanted or expired medications for safe and proper disposal at the 5,327 Take-Back sites.
- You can organize a Take-Back initiative in your community by visiting the [Drug Enforcement Administration website for a toolbox](#) and by working with a [Safe Kids Coalition in your area](#).

Safety Tips

If you cannot participate in a local Take-Back program, here are some tips for you:

- **DO** pour the medication into a sealable plastic bag. If medication is a solid (pill, liquid capsule, etc.), add water to dissolve it.
- **DO** add kitty litter, sawdust, coffee grounds (or any material that mixes with the medication and makes it less appealing for children and pets to eat) to the plastic bag.
- **DO** remove any instructions and personal information from the bottle or packaging.
- **DO NOT** share with others who might say they take that medication.

Medications You Should Flush Away

- The Food and Drug Administration ([FDA](#)) says certain medications are so dangerous that they should still be flushed down the toilet. Details about those medications are available [here](#).

Resources

- Safe Kids [Medication Safety Guide](#)



Medicine Safety: Safe Seniors



What You Need to Know

Did you know that up to 20% of child medication poisonings in the U.S. involve a grandparent's medication? Since more than half of seniors choose non-child resistant caps on medication bottles, safe storage of these medications is all the more critical. Safe Kids urges grandparents to take extra precautions to guard against a medicine-related emergency.

Your Medicine

- Always store medications in a safe and locked location, out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Grandparents should request and use child-resistant bottles if you are able, and keep medicines and vitamins in those containers, not in cups or reminder containers.
- If you must use easy-open containers, keep them and your weekly pill boxes in a safe and secure place and out of the reach of children.
- Avoid taking your medication in front of children, as they like to imitate adults.
- To help remember to take your medicines or vitamins when they are no longer out in plain view, use the following tips from the CDC's *Up and Away and Out of Sight* program:
 - Write a note to yourself, and put the note somewhere you will see it: examples include the family bulletin board, refrigerator, bathroom mirror, or next to your keys.
 - Set a daily reminder for yourself. For example, you could send yourself an e-mail or set the alarm on your watch or cell phone.
 - Take your medicine or vitamins at the same time every day, if possible.
 - Use a medicine log to keep track each time you take or give medicine.

Grandchild's Medicine

- Never give adult medication to children.
- Avoid confusion by keeping all children's medicines in their original packages and containers.
- If a child's medicine container doesn't have a label or the label isn't legible, don't use it and [dispose of it safely](#).
- After using your medicine or after you give medicine to a child, immediately close it securely and put it back in a safe, locked location.
- Program the poison control center number – 1-800-222-1222 – into your home and cell phones so you have it when you need it.

Resources

- Safe Kids [Medication Safety Guide](#)
- Safe Kids [My Safe Home](#) – Helps families detect dangers in their home and identify simple steps to fix them.
- Consumer Product Safety Commission [Grandparents Safety Alert](#)
- [Choose Your Poison](#) website – California Poison Control System's "pills versus candy" quiz