

Medications

In 2008, 28,171 (91 percent) of all unintentional poisoning deaths were caused by drugs. The class of drugs known as prescription painkillers, which includes such drugs as methadone, hydrocodone, and oxycodone, were most commonly involved, followed by cocaine and heroin.³ Between 2004 and 2005, an estimated 71,000 children (≤ 18 years of age) were seen in emergency departments each year because of medication poisonings (excluding abuse and recreational drug use). Over 80 percent were because an unsupervised child found and consumed medications.⁴

- Keep all medications, including vitamins and herbal supplements, where children can't reach them or see them. **If your child can see it, assume they can reach it.**
- Close caps on medicines, vitamins, herbal supplements and other products immediately after use, making sure that they are put back on tightly.
- Keep medicines in their original bottles or containers.
- Read medicine and product labels before use, and always follow directions exactly.
- Read the label of prescription and over-the-counter medicine carefully to make sure you aren't taking more than one acetaminophen-containing product at a time.
- Always turn on the light and put on your glasses when giving or taking medication; check the dosage each time.
- Always contact your doctor or pharmacist before you take an herbal product, as they can interact with your prescribed medicines.
- **Never mix medicines and alcohol.**
- Never "borrow" a friend's medicine or take old medicine.
- Tell children what medicine is and why you must be the one to give it to them. **Never call medicine "candy" to get them to take it.**
- Take your medicine where children can't see you; they may try to imitate you.
- Only take prescription medications that are prescribed to you by a healthcare professional. Misusing or abusing prescription or over-the-counter medications is not a "safe" alternative to illicit substance abuse.
- Never take larger or more frequent doses of your medications, particularly prescription pain medications, to try to get faster or more powerful effects.
- Monitor the use of medicines prescribed for children and teenagers, such as medicines for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD.
- **Never share or sell your prescription drugs.** Keep all prescription medicines (especially prescription painkillers, such as those containing methadone, hydrocodone, or oxycodone), over-the-counter medicines (including pain or fever relievers and cough and cold medicines), vitamins and herbals in a safe place that can only be reached by people who take or give them.
- Be aware of any legal or illegal drugs that guests may bring into your home. Ask guests to store drugs where children cannot find them. Children can easily get into pillboxes, purses, backpacks, or coat pockets.

- Dispose of unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs. [Follow federal guidelines for how to do this \(FDA 2011\)](#)
- When you are taking or giving medications;
 - Do not put your next dose on the counter or table where children can reach them—it only takes seconds for a child to get them.
 - If you have to do something else while taking medicine, such as answer the phone, take any young children with you.
 - Secure the child safety cap completely every time you use a medicine.
 - After using them, do not leave medicines or household products out. As soon as you are done with them, put them away and out of sight in a cabinet where a child cannot reach them.