



## STORING MEDICINES SAFELY

Please click on any of the links below to go directly to your specified topic within this document.

[Using Non-prescription Medications Safely](#)  
[Every spring, clean out your medicine cabinet!](#)  
[How to Dispose of Your Medications Safely](#)

### Would your child know the difference between a 'Tylenol tablet' and a 'Smartie'?



Medicine safety includes more than following labels and giving children the correct dosage of medication with the correct dosing device. It also includes safely keeping medicines out of reach and sight of children.

Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) states that up to seven children under the age of 14 die in Canada every year from poisoning and 1,700 are hospitalized with serious injuries.

Researchers from Boston's Children Hospital looked at statistical data from the National Medicare Surveys that compared monthly poisonings among children and teens to the number of prescriptions written for adults from 2000 to 2009. As the adult prescriptions for lowering cholesterol and high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity increased, child poisonings have been on the incline as well.

Despite the introduction of child-proof caps on medication bottles and educational campaigns an estimated 70,000 children in the United States are seen in the emergency department every year for 'unintentional medication exposure' (medication poisoning) of which 12% were

hospitalized. It is also important to note that the majority of these children were under the age of five and had the greatest risk of ingesting:

1. Diabetes or drugs to lower blood sugar
2. Statins and other lipid-lowering medications to reduce cholesterol
3. Beta-blockers for high blood pressure and heart problems
4. Opioids for pain



Youths from the age of 13 to 19 had the second highest poison rating causing overdose by ingesting their parent's medication for recreational use.

Poison Control Centres have been receiving an increasing number of calls from parents asking about children who accidentally ingested medications. Researchers are advising paediatricians to talk with parents on how to store their medications safely while focusing on how exposures vary based on the child's age and intention.

Because we are a drug-driven society where medications are commonplace, we sometimes forget how dangerous pharmaceuticals can be for small children. Vitamins such as iron pills can be potentially fatal. With their bright colours, pills can often look like candy to a child. Make sure your vitamins are in a locked cabinet along with other medications.

- ➔ Store all medications — prescription and nonprescription — in a locked cabinet, far from kids' reach. Even items that seem harmless, such as mouthwash, can be extremely dangerous if ingested in large quantities by children.
- ➔ Never leave vitamin bottles, aspirin bottles, or other medications on kitchen tables, countertops, bedside tables, on top of refrigerators or dresser tops. Small children may decide to copy your actions and help themselves.
- ➔ Keep your medicines in a cool, dry place and away from direct light.
- ➔ The cabinet in your bathroom is the worst place to keep medicines because it gets too warm and damp.
- ➔ Keep medicines in their original labelled container and keep the cap closed.
- ➔ Don't rely on packaging to protect your kids — child-resistant packaging does not mean childproof packaging.
- ➔ Do not store medicine with food and household products.
- ➔ Teach your children that while medications help people feel better they can also be very dangerous so they should never eat them. Never refer to the medications as candy.
- ➔ Never prepare or give medication to a child in the dark: You may give the wrong dosage or even the wrong medication.
- ➔ Make sure purses and bags — yours and your guests' — that could contain poisonous items such as medications are kept out of the reach of kids at all times.

- ➔ Be aware of all medications in your home.

## Using Non-prescription Medications Safely

- ➔ Always ask your pharmacist about the best relief for cough and colds, allergies, pain, stomach problems, and infections.
- ➔ Use non-prescription medications only for minor health problems.
- ➔ Read the label carefully and follow the directions accurately.



- ➔ Tell your pharmacist and doctor about all the medications that you are taking.

- ➔ Many products are not for children; please check the labels.

### Every spring, clean out your medicine cabinet!

- ➔ Never take old medicines; they may not work and have the potential to harm you.
- ➔ Take an inventory of all the medicines you have at home and remove prescription medications that are old or that you are no longer taking.
- ➔ Remove old or expired non-prescription medications, including cough and cold, pain, first aid, vitamin and herbal product medications.
- ➔ Remove medicines that are no longer in their original containers or with labels that you cannot read.
- ➔ Take out medicines that have changed colour, smell or taste.

## How to Dispose of Your Medications Safely

- ➔ Bring all the medicines you have cleaned out of your medicine cabinet to your local pharmacy so that they will be disposed of safely.
- ➔ If you are questioning the quality of a medication ask your pharmacist.
- ➔ Don't throw medicines in the garbage – children or animals may find it.
- ➔ Don't flush medicines down the toilet or down the drain – it's hazardous to children and pets and definitely not good for our environment.