

## General advice about medicines

This leaflet gives general information about giving medicines to children. Leaflets on individual medicines are available on [www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk)



This leaflet is for parents and carers about how to give medicines to children. Our information sometimes differs from that provided by the manufacturers, because their information is usually aimed at adults. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

### What is medicine?

The word medicine refers to any substance used to prevent or treat a medical condition.

### What are children's medicines available as?

Types of medicines available for children include:

- tablets
- capsules
- liquid medicine
- granules or powder
- lozenges
- injections
- inhalers
- suppositories or enemas
- creams or ointments for skin
- eye drops or ointments
- ear drops/sprays
- nose drops/spray
- patches

You can read more information about types of children's medicines and how to give them on the Medicines for Children website [www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk)

### How much medicine should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of medicine (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

### When should I give the medicine?

- Your doctor or pharmacist will tell you how often you need to give the medicine.
- Try to give medicines at about the same time(s) each day so that this becomes part of your child's daily routine, which will help you to remember.
- Some medicines should be taken with food or milk. Other medicines work best on an empty stomach.
- There are a few medicines that should not be taken with certain foods, juices or milk. This should be shown on the medicine label.
- If you are not sure which food and drink your child should have with the medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.



It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions about how much medicine to give and when to give it.

### What if I forget to give it or give too much?

This depends on the medicine your child is taking.

Detailed advice is available on the individual medicines leaflets on the Medicines for Children website [www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk)

If you are concerned that you may have forgotten to give a dose or may have given your child too much, contact your doctor or local NHS services (111 in England and Scotland; 111 or 0845 4647 in parts of Wales). Have the medicine or packaging with you if you telephone for advice.

### Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they have other effects that we don't want (side-effects).

It is important to read about possible side-effects when giving a new medicine.

Detailed information about side-effects is given on the individual medicines leaflets available on the Medicines for Children website [www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk)

There is also an information leaflet covering general side effects from children's medicines available here: [www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/side-effects-childrens-medicines](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/side-effects-childrens-medicines)

When giving your child a medicine, if you notice anything unusual and are concerned, contact your doctor. You can report any suspected side-effects to a UK safety scheme at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)

### Can other medicines be given at the same time?

- You can usually give your child medicines that contain paracetamol, unless your doctor has told you not to or they are already taking a medicine that contains paracetamol, for example some cold remedies and some pain killers.
- If your child is taking medicines prescribed by their doctor, check with their doctor or pharmacist **before** giving them any other medicines. This includes herbal and complementary medicines and medicines that you can buy over the counter from a chemist.

### General advice about medicines

- If you are not sure a medicine is working, contact your doctor but continue to give the medicine as usual in the meantime. Do not give extra doses as you may do harm.
- Only give the medicine to *your* child. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.

### General advice about medicines continued

- If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact your doctor straight away.
- Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that medicine you have at home has not reached the 'use by' date on the packaging.
- Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

### Where should I keep the medicine?

- Keep medicines in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight.
- You may need to keep liquid medicines in the fridge - check the instructions on the bottle. Make sure the medicine does not freeze.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

### Who to contact for more information

Your child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about your child's medicine.

You can also get useful information from:

#### England: NHS 111

Tel 111 - [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

#### Scotland: NHS 24

Tel 111 - [www.nhs24.scot](http://www.nhs24.scot)

#### Wales: NHS Direct

Tel 0845 46 47 (2p per minute) or 111 (free)

[www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk)

#### Northern Ireland: NI Direct

[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

[www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk)



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The primary source for the information in this leaflet is the British National Formulary for Children. For details on any other sources used for this leaflet, please contact us through our website, [www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk](http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk). We take great care to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is important that you ask the advice of your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure about something. This leaflet is about the use of these medicines in the UK, and may not apply to other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading this leaflet.