

Side-effects from children's medicines



This leaflet has been written for parents and carers about possible side-effects from children's medicines. It will support you in discussing any concerns you may have with your child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

What is a side-effect?

We use medicines to help our children, but sometimes they have effects that we don't want, such as feeling sick or getting a rash. These are called side-effects.

How do I know if my child has side-effects?

If your child develops any new symptoms after starting a medicine, or at any other time, these may be side-effects. However, often it is difficult to be certain whether a medicine has definitely caused the symptoms or whether they are due to your child's health condition or a new illness. If your child is taking lots of different medicines, it can also be difficult to work out which (if any) medicine or medicines have caused the symptoms.

What should I do if I think my child has a side-effect?

If it is a mild effect that is not causing your child any problem, you may not need to do anything immediately. However, if you are worried or it gets worse contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. If your child is very unwell take them to hospital.

If you think your child is getting side-effects, it may be helpful to keep a diary of when your child takes their medicines and any symptoms you notice – this will be useful to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse when working out what is causing the problem.

Here are some questions that might be useful to consider and discuss with your child's doctor, nurse or pharmacist:

- When did you first notice the symptoms?
- When do the symptoms happen?
- Is there anything else that might have caused the symptoms?
- Has your child ever had symptoms like this before?
- Are the symptoms a known side-effect of the medicine?

Here are some further questions you might want to ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are concerned that your child may be experiencing side-effects from a medicine:

- How certain is it that my child's medicine has caused a side-effect?
- Should my child stop taking the medicine?
- Will this side-effect be recorded in my child's medical notes?
- Will my child be able to have the medicine again?
- Will the side-effect cause any long-term problems.
- Will my other children get similar side-effects if they need to take the same medicine?
- Is there an alternative medicine that my child could take?

How long do side-effects last?

Children may get side-effects such as headache or nausea (feeling sick) when they first start taking a new medicine but these often wear off after a few days.

Some side-effects will continue while your child is taking the medicine. Your doctor will give you advice about how to manage these side-effects

What can my doctor do if side-effects are a problem?

Your doctor may be able to reduce the dose of the medicine so that your child can get used to it, or swap to a different medicine. You should not reduce the dose or stop giving the medicine without talking to your doctor.

Sometimes you may need to discuss the balance between the benefits of treatment and the side-effects and whether these are acceptable.

Your doctor will note in your child's records if a particular medicine causes problems. It may be useful to keep a note of the name of the medicine, in case another doctor prescribes it. This is particularly important if your child has ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.

Where can I find more information about side-effects?

Most medicines come with an information leaflet that explains what the medicine is for and how to take it. The leaflet also lists the possible side-effects ranging from those that are fairly common to those that are very rare.

Information about side-effects is also given in the leaflet for each medicine on the Medicines for Children website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk.

Reporting side-effects to the medicines safety 'watchdog'



The Medicines and Health Care products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is the watchdog for the safety of medicines in the UK. The MHRA monitors side-effects through its YellowCard scheme. This acts as an early warning system to identify new side-effects and get more information about other problems that might not have been known about before.

If a new side-effect is identified, the MHRA will review the way the medicine is used, and any warnings that are needed to help minimise risk whilst maximising the benefit to the patient.

Anyone can report a side-effect to the MHRA via its Yellow Card Scheme:

- www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard
- Freephone – 0808 100 3352 (10am to 2pm Monday-Friday only)
- via a downloadable app

Who to contact for more information.

Your child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about side-effects from medicines.

You can also get useful information from:

England: NHS 111

Tel 111 www.nhs.uk

Scotland: NHS 24

Tel 111 www.nhs24.scot

Wales: NHS Direct

Tel 0845 4647 (2p per min) or 111 (free)

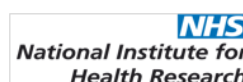
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland: NI Direct www.nidirect.gov.uk

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

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.