

**YOU'RE  
NEVER TOO ...**



**TO BE  
MEDICINEWISE**

Small mistakes can cause big problems in little bodies, so parents and carers need to know how to give medicines to children safely. Accurately measuring and administering medicines to children helps avoid accidental overdosing or under dosing. Medicines given incorrectly by parents and carers is the most common reason for accidental poisonings in Australian children under 12 months.

## HOW TO BE MEDICINEWISE WITH CHILDREN

### READ THE LABEL

Read labels and packaging each time you are buying a medicine and before giving a medicine to a child.

Children's medicines come in different forms and strengths for different ages. Make sure you know the strength of the medicine when measuring a child's dose, so you don't over or under dose them.

### KNOW THE ACTIVE INGREDIENT

The active ingredient is the chemical that makes the medicine work. Common active ingredients like paracetamol can be found in a range of medicines either on their own or in a combination formula.

Don't risk double-dosing. If you are giving more than one medicine to your child, make it a habit to always check the active ingredients.

### DOSE ACCORDING TO AGE AND WEIGHT

Over-the-counter children's medicine labels often contain age and average weight dosage recommendations. Read these tables carefully.

Working out how much medicine to give your child isn't always easy, but the dosage instructions need to be closely followed to avoid over or under dosing.

Do not give more than the recommended dose for the child's age. If your child is small or large for their age, ask for dosing guidance from your doctor or pharmacist. If your child is overweight, the medicine dose is calculated on the child's ideal body weight (or average weight) for their age. This information is often found on the product label.

### MEASURE ACCURATELY

Accurate measurements for liquid medicines matter. Spoons are for the kitchen, not medicine! A spoon does not provide an accurate measure.

Use the dosing device provided in the package, such as a dropper, oral syringe or medicine cup. If the medicine doesn't come with a dosing device, ask your pharmacist to recommend one.

Before using any measuring device, check the markings to make sure it can measure the right dose for your child. Remember that some doses are very small, so double check for decimal points (for example, check if the dosage could be 0.8ml not 8ml). And get in the habit each time you buy or are prescribed a new medicine to ask for advice on the most accurate dosing device.

### WRITE IT DOWN

Keeping a record can help you to avoid exceeding the maximum daily dose and reduce the risk of double dosing. Each time you give a medicine to a child, write down the time given and the exact dose. This information can be especially useful if you need to see a health professional and helps with communication when there's more than one person caring for a child, to ensure that no more than the recommended dose is given.

**BE MEDICINEWISE WEEK**

All ages & life stages 12-18 OCTOBER 2015

Find out more at [nps.org.au/be-medicinewise-week](http://nps.org.au/be-medicinewise-week)

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## HOW TO BE MEDICINEWISE WITH CHILDREN

### BE PREPARED

No one wants a sick child, but it's important to be prepared. Don't wait until the last minute or the middle of the night when your child is sick to know how much to dose your child.

It's important to weigh children regularly, know how to interpret medicine dosage information on labels about age and weight, know how to use your measuring device and have the proper measuring device handy. If you are unsure how to interpret dosing on product labelling, check the correct dosage to give your child with your doctor or pharmacist.

### PREVENTING ACCIDENTAL POISONING

Parents and carers also need to be responsible with medicines in the home to keep them out of reach of children.

- ▶ Store all medicines at least 1.5m from the ground, out of sight and reach of children.
- ▶ Don't let children see you taking medicines.
- ▶ Return medicines to their safe storage location immediately after use.
- ▶ Remove expired or unused medicines from your home by taking them to your community pharmacy for safe disposal.

### MORE INFORMATION

If you have any concerns about overdosing or accidental poisonings, immediately ring the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26, or take the child to the nearest hospital emergency department.

If you have any questions about medicines and children, call the pharmacists at the Medicines Line on 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424) from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local phone call (calls from mobiles may cost more). Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm AEST (excluding NSW public holidays).

[www.nps.org.au/children](http://www.nps.org.au/children)

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