

Keeping medicine safely in your home

Keept track of all the medicine in your home, especially if you have children or teens. This goes for both medicines that your dentist or physician prescribes for you and the medicines you buy over the counter, such as aspirin. Children and teens might not follow directions when they take medicine, so watch them to make sure they use it correctly. People can get sick or die if they take medicine incorrectly.

OVERDOSE BY ACCIDENT

Don't leave children alone with any kind of medicine, even over-the-counter medicine. Children may think medicine is candy or juice, especially if it is colorful or sweet. More than 60,000 children go to the hospital every year because they took a medicine when no one was looking.¹

Tell your dentist and other doctors you see about all the medicines you take and tell your child's dentist and other doctors about all the medicines your child takes.

Don't mix medicines. If you are already taking medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist before adding another. Some medicines have the same active ingredient. The active ingredient is what makes a medicine work. You can overdose if you take more than one medicine with the same active ingredient.

DRUG ABUSE

Some children, teens and adults abuse medicine to get high. People can abuse prescription medicine or over-the-counter medicine. In 2010, high school seniors abused medicine more often than any other substance except marijuana.² In a 2011 survey, almost one in five teens said they had abused prescription medicines at least once. More than one in 10 teens said they had abused over-the-counter cough or cold medicine.³

KEEPING YOUR HOME SAFER

Here are some things you can do to make your home safer:

- Put medicine where children can't take it without permission.

- Put medicine away every time you use it. Never leave medicine on the kitchen counter or at a sick child's bedside, even if you have to use it again soon.

- Listen for the click to make sure the safety cap is locked.

- Never tell children that a medicine is candy to get them to take it.

- Tell guests about safety. Ask friends and family to keep purses, bags and coats that have medicine in them up and away and out of sight when they are visiting.

- Be prepared in case of an emergency. Put the poison control telephone number (1-800-222-1222) in your home and cell phone speed dials.

Here are some ways to keep medicine from being abused:

- Do not keep medicine on hand "just in case" you might need it later. Get rid of medicine you have finished using. Ask your doctor or pharmacist how to dispose of medicine you no longer need.

- Always know how much medicine should be in each bottle.

- Do not share medicine. Do not take anything a doctor ordered for someone else. Do not let anyone else take your medicine.

- Keep medicine in the package it came in. This makes it easier for you to know what you are taking or giving your child. ■

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"For the Patient" provides general information on dental treatments to dental patients. It is designed to prompt discussion between dentist and patient about treatment options and does not substitute for the dentist's professional assessment based on the individual patient's needs and desires.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Put Your Medicines Up and Away and Out of Sight. www.cdc.gov/features/medicationstorage/. Accessed Nov. 20, 2013.

2. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Topics in Brief: Prescription Drug Abuse. www.drugabuse.gov/publications/topics-in-brief/prescription-drug-abuse. Accessed Nov. 20, 2013.

3. The Partnership at Drugfree.org/MetLife Foundation. The Partnership Attitude Tracking Survey: 2011 Parents and Teens Full Report. www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/PATS-FULL-Report-FINAL-May-2-PDF-.pdf. Accessed Nov. 20, 2013.