



## Medication Safety for Children

Children are encouraged to explore and discover their surroundings. Exploration helps a child learn and grow. However, sometimes it can be dangerous if they were to get ahold of household products or medications that may be dangerous. "Children can be very curious when it comes to medications. They watch a parent or grandparent take a medication and they want to be able to imitate them," explains Deb Carpenter, childhood injury prevention coordinator at Bronson Children's Hospital. "It's also difficult because many medications look and taste like candy. Plus, some medication bottles are easy to open."

According to the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), "Every day, over 300 children and teens in the U.S. are treated in an emergency department as a result of being poisoned."<sup>1</sup> With medications more readily available, children are more prone to accidentally swallow or ingest medications. This includes:

- Prescription drugs
- Over-the-counter medicines
- Vitamins
- Herbs
- Dietary supplements

According to [Safe Kids Worldwide](#), "Medications are the leading cause of child poisoning. In 2013, over 59,000 children were seen in emergency room for medicine poisoning. That's one child every nine minutes." In a lot of the emergency room cases, children ingested medications in moments where they were alone and not being supervised. It's important to take steps to protect children from being able to get ahold of medications. Here are some tips for protecting your child from medication poisoning:

- Keep all medications in the original packaging.
- Keep the medication away and locked up, out of children's reach and sight.
- Always read the label carefully when giving children medication.
- Write clear instructions for your child's medications for any caregivers.
- Do not keep any medications that are unused, unneeded or expired.
- Medications can also be turned in at local law enforcement agencies as part of local take-back programs.

### What to do if you think your child has been poisoned?

It's important to know what to do if you think your child has been poisoned. Keep the Poison Help number (1 (800) 222-1222) on your phone. It's also a good idea to keep the phone number posted on your fridge or somewhere where a caregiver can easily access. Always remember, the number is not just for emergencies, you can also contact Poison Control for questions about how to take or give medications.

*This article is brought to you by Bronson Children's Hospital, southwest Michigan's only children's hospital. For more information about children's health, visit [bronsonhealth.com/services/children](http://bronsonhealth.com/services/children).*

<sup>1</sup>CDC: Protect the Ones You Love: Child Injuries are Preventable: <https://www.cdc.gov/safechild/poisoning/index.html>

<sup>2</sup>Safe Kids Worldwide: Medication Safety: <https://www.safekids.org/medicinesafety>