

Using medicine safely

A Healthy NewsWorks project



Illustration by Tamiara Childs, Grade 6, Hope Partnership for Education

Student reporters share safety tips

Each year more than 71,000 children are seen in hospital emergency departments for unintentional overdoses of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

During the 2012-13 school year, Healthy NewsWorks student journalists researched and wrote stories to increase children's understanding of medicines. This brochure includes some of the important safety tips that the reporters shared with their fellow students and school families.

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Don't share medicines

Note: A version of this story appeared in the spring edition of the Healthy Panther at the Eisenhower Science and Leadership Academy in Norristown, Pa.

Medicines can be helpful, but they also can be harmful if they are not used properly, according to Dr. Kevin Osterhoudt, medical director of the Poison Control Center at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

In a telephone interview with the *Healthy Panther*, Dr. Osterhoudt explained that many substances can be drugs — even food — if they have an effect on the body.



The Poison Control Center gets a lot of scary calls after people have taken medicines incorrectly or have used medicines that aren't meant for them. The center offers an emergency hotline that provides information and treatment advice.

People need to use medicines safely, said Dr. Osterhoudt. It is important to take all the medicine that the doctor prescribes so it can treat your specific illness. If you stop your prescription, your medicine may not be effective.

Dr. Osterhoudt said people should never share their medicines because people react differently to each medicine. If a patient shares medicine, it also means that he or she is not taking the proper amount.

People should be mindful about the medicines they have in the house. These products can be poisonous to young children.

"I want parents to know that medicines are important tools, but they can be dangerous so they need to be properly stored," Dr. Osterhoudt said.

Dr. Osterhoudt wants children to know that they never should take a medicine unsupervised.

It also important to ask doctors, nurses, and pharmacists questions you may have about the medicines, according to Dr. Osterhoudt. Patients should read the package label carefully to know how to take the medicine.

—Story by Healthy Panther staff

—Illustration by Zhafir Satterthwaite

ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW THE MEDICINE LABEL



USE
Medicine
SAFELY

↑↑↑
WARNING

Illustration by Ruqayyah Taylor, Grade 4, Gotwals Elementary School

Follow these safety tips

Nancy Erickson, a school nurse for more than 20 years and a Healthy NewsWorks advisory board member, said children should remember these four rules before taking a medicine:

- 1) Always check that your name is on the label.
- 2) Know what your medicine looks like.
- 3) Read the instructions.
- 4) Ask a parent or doctor if you have any questions.

To learn more visit:

- "What medicines are and what they do" at www.KidsHealth.org
- "Put Your Medications Up and Away and Out of Sight" at www.upandaway.org
- "Addressing the dangers of prescription drug use" at www.connectandprotectpa.org



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The Healthy NewsWorks® student media program engages elementary and middle school students in transforming the health of our communities.

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