

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GIVING MEDICATIONS TO CHILDREN:

THE QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD GET ANSWERS TO BY YOUR PHYSICIAN OR PHARMACIST BEFORE GIVING ANY MEDICATION TO YOUR CHILD

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ABSTRACT

Medications may be important to improve or maintain your child's health. However, quite often errors are made while giving medications to babies and children. Here are questions parents should ask to avoid such errors. It is important for parents to write down the answers, so they can read them as often as they feel needed.

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1) *What is the name of the medication?*

(Both commercial and chemical names with correct spelling)

***Beware:** Many drugs may sound alike although they are different.

2) *What is the medication for?*

How does it work?

3) *How is it given?* (e.g., teaspoonful, tablet?)

How much to give? How many times a day? With or without food? How should this medicine be properly stored? (Room temperature, refrigerator, out of the reach of children).

***Beware:** Often there are errors in dose when switching from syrup to tablets.

4) *Is it the typical dose for my child's diagnosis, weight and age?*

***Beware:** High doses increase the risk of toxicity for many medications.

5) *When / how quickly will it work?*

Will I be able to tell, or does it work "silently"? What are the signs that indicate it is working?

6) *What are common side-effects I should look for?*

How common are they?

7) *What are serious side-effects of this medication?*

How common are they? What are the symptoms to watch that might indicate a risk?

What are the symptoms that indicate I need to contact my doctor right away?

In accidental overdose – what to expect?

What to do? How dangerous is it?

8) *What is the alternative(s) for this medication?*

9) *My child is allergic to ...* (state all allergies)

Does this medication contain this ingredient or something contraindicated with this allergy? Is the medication dangerous when given with other medicines my child may need?

List all other medications you give your child, including: prescription, over-the-counter, and complementary or alternative natural health products (e.g., echinacea, etc.). Remember to ask your physician or pharmacist if a medicine you can select yourself (over-the-counter medicine) or herbal product (natural health product) can safely be administered while your child is taking this medicine.

10) *When changes are made --be doubly careful*

When the dose of medicine is increased, when the formulation is changed (e.g., from syrup to tablet), when your doctor or pharmacist change. Errors occur more commonly upon changes in routine.

Double-check with the pharmacist if the medicine changes in any way (amount, color, taste or texture). Use a calibrated medicine oral syringe to administer liquid medicine.