

Candy or Medicine? Help Prevent Accidental Overdose in Children

When we think about poison safety, household cleaners & chemicals first come to mind; however, medications if placed in the wrong hands can be dangerous and even deadly! While we keep medications and vitamins in convenient areas, like near the bathroom or kitchen sink or on a nightstand, they could be posing a major threat to the children in our lives.

Many medications currently on the market resemble popular candy, from M & M's & Skittles that look like Coricidin to Hershey's Chocolate that resemble an Ex-Lax to Gummy Bears that look like Vitamins. Additionally, with new appealing flavors, like blue raspberry and bubble gum, now available to get the most stubborn child to take their medication, telling the difference between candy and medicine is even more confusing. During Progressive Agriculture Safety Days, youth participants are challenged to tell the difference between medicine and candy when looking at a mock-medicine cabinet. Past studies have indicated that one million phone calls are placed annually to the Poison Control Center because their child ingested something poisonous and more than 150 young children in the United States visit emergency rooms daily due to ingesting medication. Very few of these cases are due to errors in dosage and most are the result of children ingesting medication while unsupervised. No matter what the scenario, these accidents could have been prevented or avoided with proper education. As parents or caregivers, we go through numerous measures to keep our children safe, yet there could be hidden hazardous right under our nose! Therefore, what can we do to protect our children and prevent accidental overdoses or ingestion from happening?

- First, always use child-resistant packaging and secure the bottles after use.
- Secondly, keep all medications locked up and out of sight.
- Third, be sure to keep original labels on all products and make sure to properly identify medicine and dosage instructions before taking or administering.
- Fourth, educate your children using the iconic Mr. Yuk stickers to identify potential poisonous products. This is very helpful to younger children, especially those who cannot yet read but can associate Mr. Yuk with harmful products. You can obtain Mr. Yuk stickers from the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222 or search for local chapters).
- Fifth, never share prescription drugs or medication with anyone other than who they are prescribed to. Finally, keep the number for the Poison Control Center posted in a visible, central, and easy to find place so babysitters and other family members can locate it if an emergency arises.
- Lastly, in addition to keeping your children and loved ones safe, it is important to keep your community safe as well by disposing of medications properly. Follow FDA (Food & Drug Administration) & ONDCP (Office of National Drug Control Policy) guidelines for disposing of drug and medications or talk to a pharmacist if in doubt. Take advantage of community take-back programs, where you can take unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. If there are no specific recommendations for disposal or you are permitted to throw your drugs away in the trash, take them out of the bottle and mix with undesirable items or place in a baggie or can to avoid them getting eaten by a pet or child and to avoid leakage. Before discarding your bottles, be sure to remove all personal information from the bottle to avoid identify theft.

These safety tips are examples of what children learn when they attend a Progressive Agriculture Safety Day®, which are held each year in more than 400 local communities throughout North America. Learn more about the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day® program at **www.progressiveag.org**