

Let's Talk About...

Medication safety and how to give

Giving your child medicine safely can be complicated. And many parents feel the pressure when a young child needs certain medications, knowing that giving too much or too little could cause serious side effects.

But with a little knowledge and a lot of double-checking, and understanding the different methods of giving medicine, you can give your child medicine safely and prevent dangerous reactions.

Before you give your child medicine, make sure you know your abbreviations.

- tbsp: Tablespoon
- ml: Milliliter
- tsp: Teaspoon
- mg: Milligram
- oz: Ounce

If the prescribed dose is in a different unit than your measuring syringe, cup, or spoon, don't try to convert it and don't use a regular spoon because that's not the same as a measuring spoon.

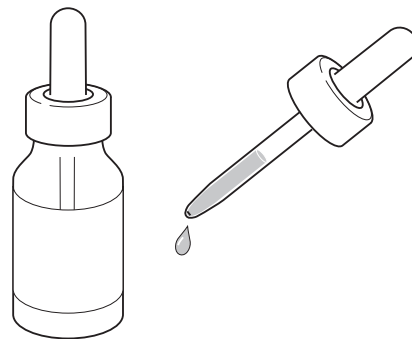
Using medications safely means knowing when they're necessary—and when they're not. Always check with the doctor if you're unsure whether symptoms require treatment with medication.

What are the different ways to give my child medicine?

There are a number of ways to give your child medicine. Depending on the illness each medicine will be a little different. It is important for parents to know the different methods of giving medicine to your child. It will save you time spent in the doctor's office or standing in line at the pharmacy. Here's a complete list of ways to give medicine:

Medicine droppers

Droppers are mostly used for babies, because babies cannot chew or swallow capsules. Usually, the medicine dropper comes with the bottle of liquid medicine. Droppers have a measuring line on them. Make sure your baby's dose is the same as is



measured on the medicine dropper. If you have any questions, contact your child's healthcare provider or pharmacist.

To give your baby medicine through a dropper:

- Unscrew the dropper and take it out of the medicine bottle.
- Squeeze the rubber top, put the dropper in the medicine, and begin sucking the medicine up to the right measuring line. Then let go of the rubber top.
- Hold your baby in your lap, raise their head slightly, and rest their head against your body.
- Squirt the medicine in the side of your baby's mouth (inside the cheek) and towards the back. It may help to squeeze your baby's cheeks slightly until they swallow the medicine. This will help stop your baby from spitting the medicine out.

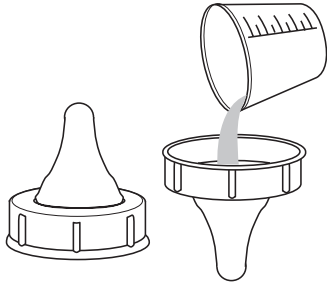
Do not give your baby medicine when they are lying down because they could choke.

Nipple

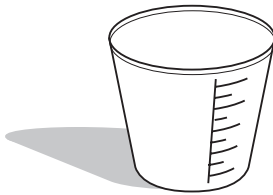
A nipple will probably work best when your baby is hungry.

To give your baby medicine through a nipple:

- Measure the medicine with a plastic syringe or small measuring cup and put it into the nipple (see illustration).



- Hold your baby like you normally do when feeding them from a bottle.
- Let your baby suck from the nipple. Make sure they suck all the medicine out of the nipple.
- Rinse the nipple with warm water when you are finished.



Medicine cup

A medicine cup is a small, plastic cup with measuring marks on the side. Use a medicine cup for your toddler or child if they normally drink from a cup.

To give your child medicine in a medicine cup:

- Pour liquid medicine into the medicine cup. Make sure you've poured the right amount.
- Give your child the medicine slowly. Allow them to swallow between sips.
- Rinse the medicine cup with warm water when you are finished.

Syringe

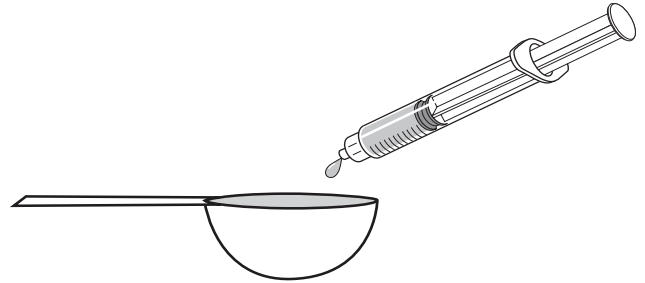
You can use a plastic oral syringe with no needle to give liquid medicines to babies and toddlers.

To give your child medicine with a syringe:

- Clean the syringe by pulling on the plunger to fill it with warm water. Then push the water out. Rinse and empty the syringe several times, but do not take the syringe apart
- After the syringe is clean, push the plunger all the way down. Put the syringe tip in the medicine or into the stopper in the bottle. Then pull the plunger until the medicine is at the right level.

- Hold your child in your lap, raise their head slightly, and rest their head against your body.
- Put the syringe to the side and the back of your child's mouth. Slowly push down the plunger on the syringe, giving your child time to swallow.
- Rinse the syringe with warm water when you are finished.

Do not give your child medicine when they are lying down, because they could choke.



Teaspoon

If your child's healthcare provider asks you to give your child a teaspoon of medicine, do not use an ordinary spoon. Use a measuring spoon so you can give your child the right dose.

To give your child medicine with a teaspoon:

- Pour the medicine into the teaspoon. Do not overfill it.
- Put the teaspoon in your child's mouth and let them swallow it slowly.
- Rinse the teaspoon with warm water when you are finished.

If the directions on the medicine say to use a teaspoon or tablespoon, ask your pharmacist how much to give your child.

Pills and capsules

Do not give your baby or toddler pills. Make sure your child is old enough to know how to swallow pills before using them.

To give older children pills:

- Have your child drink some water before swallowing a pills , unless the directions say not to.
- Have your child swallow the pills and then drink more water.
- Put the lid back on the medicine bottle tightly and store it out of your child's reach.



Rectal medicines or suppositories

Your child may need a rectal suppository to quickly absorb medicine.

To give your child a rectal suppository:

- Place your baby on their stomach across your legs. Have toddlers and preschoolers lie on their sides, facing you.
- Unwrap the suppository if it comes wrapped and show it to older children. Explain what you are doing with the suppository if your child can understand.
- Gently push the pointed end of the suppository into your child's rectum one inch. After inserting it, hold your child's buttocks together for at least 5 minutes to prevent them from pushing the medicine out.
- Wash your hands well when you are finished.

Ear drops

Your child may need ear drops if they have ear pain or an infection.

To give your child ear drops:

- Explain what you are doing if your child is old enough to understand.
- Have your child lie on their side, with the ear that needs the medicine facing up.

- Gently pull your child's outer ear down and toward the back of their head. Squeeze the bottle gently until the right number of drops fall into your child's ear.
- Have your child continue to lie on their side for 5–15 minutes, if possible. Tell your child the medicine will help them. It is best to have them lying on their side—this allows the medicine work.

Chewable tablets

Chewable tablets are safe for toddlers and older children. Do not give chewable tablets to your baby.

To give your child chewable tablets:

- Have your child chew tablets and then have a drink of water, juice, or milk.
- Ask the pharmacist if you can crush the tablets and mix them with food if your child will not swallow them. Sometimes crushing tablets and mixing them with food or liquids makes them less effective.
- If you can crush the tablets, mix them with fruit syrup, flavored yogurt, or applesauce. Make sure your child eats the full amount so they take all the medicine.

How do I make sure my child takes the right amount of medicine?

- Always follow the directions on the medicine or the directions from your doctor or pharmacist.
- Double-check your child's dose before you give them any medicine.
- Don't confuse milligrams (mg) and milliliters (mL). They are not the same. Milliliters measure the volume of liquids; milligrams measure weight. When you pick up liquid medicine, ask the pharmacist to show you the amount to give your child on the syringe, cup or dropper.
- If you are not sure how much medicine to give your child, call your child's healthcare provider or pharmacist.

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