

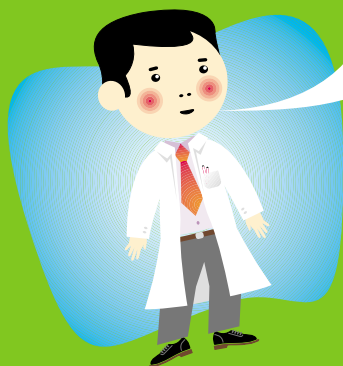
How to give
medications
to children

This pamphlet is designed to make medicine giving and taking a positive experience for everyone!

General tips to remember

- Be confident and firm
- Have a positive approach
- Be honest and understanding
- Listen
- Allow the child to have some control
- Describe what the child will see, hear, feel, smell and taste
- Use language they will understand
- Emphasize the benefits of taking the medication
- Give lots of cuddles afterwards.

always remember to keep medicines out of reach of children



Age specific advice

Infants (1 – 12 months)

Infants are developing basic trust and need to have their carer close by.

Advice:

- Give gentle cuddles before and after giving medicines
- Have the child's favourite toy nearby for comfort.

Toddlers (1 – 3 years)

Toddlers are slowly developing language skills and are still very attached to mum, dad or carer.

Advice:

- Have a calm and confident approach
- Give simple explanations using dolls and stuffed toys
- Encourage play-acting with the child's favourite toys.

Pre-schoolers (3 – 5 years)

At this stage, children have developed communication and self-care abilities.

Advice:

- Give simple explanations to let the child know what is happening so that he or she does not think that this is a punishment
- Have a positive approach and make positive statements eg “That was good, you drank it all down”
- Tell the child that he or she are good medicine takers, not that they are good for taking the medicine
- Allow the child to choose from various options eg cup or syringe, sitting in a chair or on carer’s lap
- Rewards such as stickers are good.

School-age children (6 – 12 years)

School-age children are more aware of the world around them and have a better understanding about illnesses and treatment.

Advice:

- Use diagrams, drawings, models and teaching dolls to explain what is going on
- Include the child in the decision making.

Adolescents (12 years and older)

Adolescents like to feel independent, but at the same time need to know that there is someone there to depend on.

Advice:

- Involve them in discussions so that they know what is happening
- Allow them to share the responsibility and make decisions about their own treatment.

Giving medications – Some practical hints

Oral Medications

Liquid preparations

- Always use a measuring cup or oral syringe, as different teaspoons hold different amounts
- Always read doses and measurements carefully. Make it a habit to double check everything
- Shake mixtures before measuring out the dose
- It is not recommended to add medications to infant formula because the child may not get the full dose
- If a medication is added to a drink make sure the child drinks it all. Always check with your pharmacist to see if the medication is ok to be mixed with the drink
- Check the storage needs of medications as some may need to be stored in the fridge
- Always check the expiry date. Some liquid preparations have a short expiry for stability reasons.

Tablets or capsules

- Give with lots of water or a favourite cold drink
- Always ask your pharmacist if it is ok to crush or break tablets. Many tablets can be crushed and dissolved in water. Some cannot be halved or crushed as they have a protective coating or are designed to slowly release the drug. Crushing the tablet will ruin this effect
- Some capsules can be pulled apart and the contents sprinkled over food or dissolved in some water. Check with your pharmacist to see if this is all right to do.

Infants (1 – 12 months)

- Hold the infant in the nursing or feeding position
- An oral syringe is very accurate – squirt small amounts (about 1 – 2ml) towards the side of the mouth and allow the infant to swallow between each squirt
- Keep the mouth closed by holding the jaw up so that the infant cannot spit out the medicine. Gently stroke the throat downward to help with swallowing
- Wait for everything to be swallowed before laying the infant down
- A medicine spoon or cup can be used for older infants.

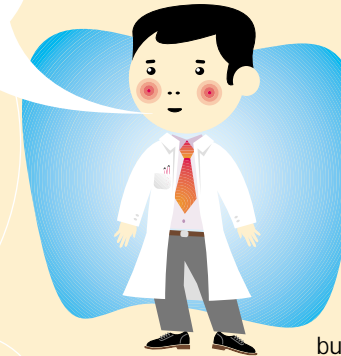
Toddlers (1 – 5 years)

- Can drink from a measuring cup with supervision
- An oral syringe can be used
- Wash it down with a favourite drink. Check with your pharmacist to see if the medication is ok to be mixed with the drink.

School-age children (6 years and over)

- Can swallow liquids from a measuring cup with extra water
- For tablets, take a sip of water and place the tablet or capsule on the back of the tongue. Then swallow the medication with a drink of water or a favourite compatible drink.

tips for each age group



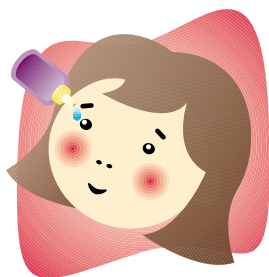
Other ways to give medications

Giving medications by mouth is not the only way to give drugs. Some medications can be given rectally while others are made into eye drops or nasal sprays for local treatment.

Knowing the right way to give the medication will ensure that the full effect of the drug is achieved.

Rectal medications

1. Use of gloves is recommended when inserting the suppository.
2. Position the child on their left side with upper leg bent and buttocks separated.
3. Moisten suppository with lubricating jelly to help with insertion.
4. Insert gently to about half the length of the finger.
 - For bullet shaped suppository, insert the smooth pointy end first
 - For tear shaped suppository, insert the larger rounded end first.
5. Hold the buttocks together for five minutes to stop the suppository being expelled.
6. Have the child lie down or sit down for about 10 minutes.
7. Discourage the child from going to the toilet after the suppository has been given.



Eye medication

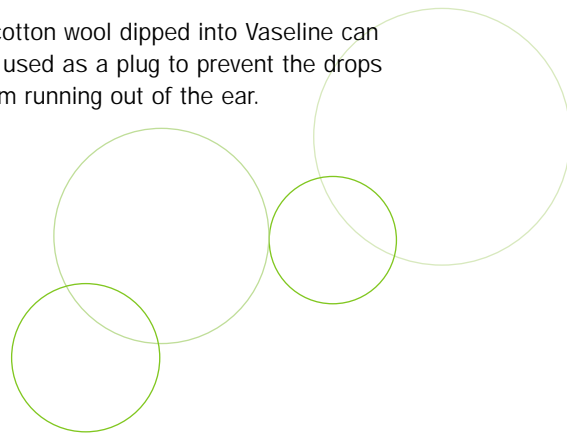
1. Wash your hands.
2. Clean any secretions from the eyes with a moistened cotton ball, wiping from the inner corner of the eye to the outer corner.
3. Have the head tilted back. Small children can lay on their backs with a small pillow under the shoulders. Direct the gaze of the child upwards.
4. Make sure the dropper does not touch the eyes or eyelashes.
5. Form a pouch by gentle pressure of a finger on the lower lid. Drop the solution or squeeze 1.5cm of ointment into the pouch. Have the child close his or her eyes for about one to two minutes.
6. Apply pressure to the inner corner of the eye to block the tear duct and stop the loss of medication through the duct.
7. Wipe away excess medication after two minutes.
8. If giving more than one drop then wait five minutes in between drops to ensure everything gets absorbed.

Note: Eye ointments can temporarily blur vision.



Ear medication

1. If the eardrops are cold then warm them up in your hands to minimise discomfort.
2. Position the child on their side or tilt their head on the side with the affected ear exposed.
3. Gently restrain the child so that the head will not turn during installation.
4. Straighten the ear canal.
 - For infants the ear should be pulled back and down
 - For older children the ear should be pulled back and up.
5. Direct the drops to the side of the ear canal without touching the side of the ear. Drops hitting the eardrum can cause pain.
6. The child should remain on their side for five minutes to allow the drops to enter the ear.
7. A cotton wool dipped into Vaseline can be used as a plug to prevent the drops from running out of the ear.




Nasal medication

Have the child blow his or her nose first before giving medication.

Drops

1. Have the child lie down with a small pillow under the shoulders to lower the head backwards which will help the flow of drops into the nose.
2. Direct the drops towards the midline of the nose to prevent them from running down the throat.
3. The child should remain in the same position for about two minutes to allow the drops to penetrate.



blow nose before
receiving medication



Sprays

1. Used more often in older children and adolescents.
2. Sit or stand in an upright position with head straight or slightly tilted back.
3. Block one nostril and spray into the opposite nostril.
4. Gently inhale the medication into the nostril as the spray is squeezed.

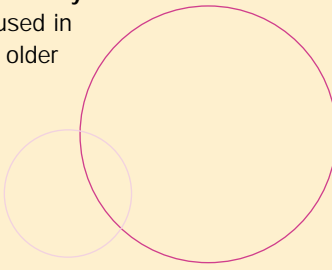
Note: If it is too hard to insert a spray into the child's nose then an alternative is to place the medication on cotton wool and insert into the nostrils briefly.

Inhalers

Metered dose inhalers eg Ventolin

- Always use a spacer as children find it difficult to use the inhaler on its own.

Accuhalers/turbuhalers eg Bricanyl

- Dry powder inhalers are used in children seven years and older
 - A deep breath is needed to draw the powder into the lungs.
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More information

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