

Medication Errors Among Children & Adolescents

Prevention Tips & Safe Practices

As children mature and begin to understand the responsibility of self-medicating, adult supervision is recommended due to poison related risks associated with label reading and therapeutic/medication errors.

A **therapeutic error** includes scenarios such as unintentional double-dosing, incorrect route of administration, wrong medication given/taken, incorrect dose, or unintentional exposure to someone else's medication. Though the use of medications are generally safe when taken as directed, misuse or therapeutic errors can be fatal.



According to a 2019 report released by the National Center for Health Statistics, 18.0% of children aged 0–11 years and 27.0% of adolescents aged 12–19 had used prescription drugs in the last 30 days in 2015-2016.

In 2020, the Tennessee Poison Center managed 2,269 cases of children and adolescents between the age of 0-19 that utilized the Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) due to a therapeutic/medication error.



**Most common error is
“Wrong medication given/taken”**

Administration of medications can occur in nearly any environment including the home, school, and child care center.

If you suspect someone has been exposed, call the toll-free Poison Help hotline first (1-800-222-1222).

If the person is unresponsive, having seizures or trouble breathing, call 911 immediately.

www.tnpoisoncenter.org

From the latest data available, unintentional poisonings continue to be the leading cause of injury death across all age groups in Tennessee, including adults.

The Tennessee Poison Center (TPC) encourage residents to call the 24/7 toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) to consult with a poison specialist for drug information, medication error, or exposure questions. This will help to prevent and minimize complications of poisonings and medication errors among children and adolescents who self-medicate or self-administer prescribed and over-the-counter medications.

Approximately 90% of adolescents report self-administering over-the-counter (OTC) medications by the age of 16 years old.



Prevention Tips & Safe Practices:

- Educate children and adolescents about safe practices including the importance of taking medicines correctly, at the recommended time, and to always read the label.
- Assist children and adolescents in dosing of medications until they have modeled consistent and safe administration.
- Keep track of the medications and dosage the child or adolescents is taking to prevent therapeutic errors.
- Never take larger/more frequent doses, even if a dose was missed, ***unless specifically directed by a physician.***
- Request written instruction from your physician or pharmacist that includes medication name, dosage, schedule, duration, and common side effects.
- Use a reminder system (checklist, cell phone).
- Model and encourage safe storage and proper disposal of unused or expired medications.
- Call the toll-free Poison Help hotline for poison emergencies or information questions including difficulty understanding dosing amount.



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