

Medicine Safety Tips

Medicine has many benefits but it also has risks. If not used in the right way, both prescription and over-the-counter medicine can harm you, and may lead to more doctor visits, a longer recovery from illness, the need for a hospital visit, or even death.

About half of all American who use medicine do not follow the directions correctly. The Illinois Poison Center can give help on how to use medicine the right way. Do not wait to call the poison center if you have a question about medicine.

In order to avoid a poisoning involving medicine, the IPC offers the following tips:

1. Read the label before taking or giving medicines.
2. Be sure you understand the directions and follow them exactly. Call the poison center if you have any questions.
3. Always use the measuring device that comes with the medicine or a device that shows exact amounts.
4. Never take prescription medicine that is not prescribed specifically for you.
5. Never take more than the number of pills you are supposed to.
6. Never mix medicines unless your doctor says that it is okay to do so. Some medicines, when mixed together, can lead to serious side effects or drug interactions.
7. Properly dispose of old medicines by using the guidelines from the IPC. For more info click [Medicine Disposal Guidelines](#)

The IPC offers many resources to help you avoid poisoning exposures. View the IPC's [Medicine Safety Brochure](#).

Many of us have to take many medications in order to stay healthy. Keep track of the medications you take with the IPC's [medicine journal](#).

PARENT ALERT!

A growing problem among young adults is the abuse of over-the-counter cough medicine. One of the main ingredients in most cough medicines is dextromethorphan (DXM). When taken correctly, DXM is safe and effective. However, young adults are trying to “get high” by taking much larger than recommended doses of DXM in the form of OTC cough syrup, tablets and gel caps.

Download the IPC's [Guide to Preventing Cough Medicine Abuse](#) to learn more about this trend and how to prevent it.