

# Are Your Kids Taking Medication?

Make sure teachers and school nurses know the ABCs of your child's medication needs.

by Paul Roldan, R.Ph.

If it seems as though more children are taking medication these days than ever before, you're right. Children are being medicated for everything from asthma to ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and diabetes to depression. When you couple this with administering medications for the colds, infections, pain and fever they may have from time to time, you can see where this increase stems from.

As if you didn't already have enough to do, as a parent it's your responsibility to be knowledgeable about the medications you administer at home and consider how medication issues may affect others responsible for your children outside your home. The better informed your children's teacher and the school nurse are of your children's medication needs, the better they will respond to the medications.

And, to help make you feel better once your child is off to school or child care, here are a few medication guidelines to keep in mind:

- Most liquids should be refrigerated since many can lose their strength if stored at room temperature.
- Most antibiotics for young children can be taken with food. Tetracycline, however, is one of those antibiotics that should not be taken with milk products and not used for children under age nine.
- Most asthma inhalers come with 200 puffs per vial. An inhaler that "floats" is a good indication that it's empty, but keeping track of the number of puffs used is most accurate.
- To measure medicine accurately use a marked medication cup, dropper or spoon. An ordinary teaspoon is not accurate.
- Medication should be in the original, childproof container. Parents can ask their pharmacist to divide the medications into two containers to avoid taking medication home from school each day. If your child uses an inhaler, ask your physician to write two prescriptions—one to be filled for home use and one which can be used at school.
- Be sure children take medications for as long as and exactly as prescribed. This is especially important when it comes to taking antibiotics.

## **Wash it Down with Water**

Recent research has shown that substances found in grapefruit juice can dramatically increase the potency of some medications. Other citrus juices can actually lessen the strength of certain drugs including some antibiotics. Milk can cause adverse reactions with certain antibiotics.

Stick with water or a less acidic juice, such as apple, when giving medication. To be safe, ask your pediatrician or pharmacist about food and drug interactions before starting new prescriptions.

## **The Scoop on Side Effects**

Parents and educators should be alert to any unusual symptoms as well as the impact of side effects on a child's learning and behavior. Side effects can range from minimal to life-threatening. So-called "minor" side effects like diarrhea, drowsiness or a rash are unpleasant but not intolerable.

Other side effects may warrant medical attention or at least a call to the doctor or health care provider. Symptoms to be aware of would include irregular heartbeat, protracted vomiting or diarrhea, fainting, extensive rash, seizures or convulsions, difficulty breathing, severe headaches, or yellowing of the skin or eyes. Be aware of the impact of medications, develop a critical awareness of what to look for and communicate it to educators and school nurses.

## **Take part when your child is taking medication**

The best way to help to prevent errors, especially when your child is away from home and in school, is to be an active member of your child's health care team.

Research shows that parents who are more involved with their child's care tend to get better results. Getting the right information about your child's medication—as well as their overall health—and communicating it to appropriate school officials will help your child recover and allow you to rest assured.

**Paul Roldan, R.Ph. is a compounding pharmacist and co-owner along with Jorge A. Restrepo, R.Ph. of JNR Pharmacy located in the Oakridge Common Center, Rte. 123 in Vista/South Salem. As a compounding pharmacist, Paul can formulate tolerable methods of drug delivery for children, adults and pets having difficulty taking medication. Paul can be reached at 914.533.JNRX (5679) and is eager to hand over a little TLC with every prescription filled.**

**Store hours are Monday through Friday 9 AM to 8 PM and Saturdays from 9 AM to 6 PM.**

# My Medication Permission Form

## for schools and child care centers

(one form/medication)

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child's full name

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parent/guardian full name

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parent/guardian address

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parent/guardian home phone #

business phone #

e-mail

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name of child's physician

phone #

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emergency contact (name/relationship/phone #)

### Medication Information

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name of medication

dosage/amount /strength

reason for taking medication

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when to use the medication (when symptoms are displayed, at set times of day, for emergency only, etc.)

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how to use medication (tablet/capsule/liquid, inhaler, other; full strength, halved, diluted, etc.)

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how the medication should be stored

### Special instructions and information

This section should include:

- whether to take medication with or without food/liquid/milk products/citrus products
- how soon the medication should take effect

- possible side effects
- shelf life of medication (expiration date or knowing when a container (such as an asthma inhaler) is empty.)

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signature of parent/guardian

please print full name

*Notice to school/child care center: Since it can take time to refill certain prescriptions, please advise parents or guardian when medication is getting low.*

**This form is courtesy of JNR PHARMACY • Oakridge Common Center • Rte 123 • Vista, NY • 914.533.JNRX (5679)**