



Medication Administration in Child Care

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Giving medication is a big responsibility; it is important for providers to be aware of the risk of liability. For licensing, it is only required to obtain written parental permission to give prescription and over-the-counter medication. In order to reduce the likelihood of a parent lawsuit, it is recommended for providers to do the following:

- Obtain written permission* and instructions for giving OTC and prescription medication from a health care provider and the child's parent.
- Follow safe practices as listed below.
- Have liability insurance.

** Written permission from a health care provider should specify medical need, medication dose, and length of time to give medication. Orders such as "Tylenol can be given as needed" should not be accepted.*

Safe Practices

1. Caregivers should follow these proper procedures when administering medications:
 - Read and understand the label/prescription directions in relation to the measured dose, frequency, and other circumstances relative to administration (for example – does the medicine need to be given with food?)
 - Check the 5 "Rights" before giving the medication – the right child, the right medication, the right dose, the right time, and the right route (ex. where do the drops go – ears, eyes, nose?)
 - Wash hands before administering the medication (and after) – wear gloves for applying topical medications
 - Observe child closely for a reaction and report any side effects from the medication (never give a first dose of new medication)
 - Document the administration of each dose by the time and the amount given – also document if a medication was not given and the reason why it was not given
2. If a child does not get the dose of medication because the child spits it out or vomits it up, do not give another dose. Document and inform the child's parents.
3. If an error is made, document what was given. Inform the child's parents. Seek medical care as needed.
4. All prescribed medication should be kept in the original container labeled by a pharmacist with the following information:
 - The child's first and last names (the name of the child on the medication and the child receiving the medication MUST be the same; a sibling or another family member's medication cannot be used).
 - The date the prescription was filled (must be a current date)
 - The name of the health care provider who wrote the prescription
 - The medication's expiration date (never give expired medication)
 - The manufacturer's instructions or prescription label with specific, legible instructions for administration, storage, and disposal
 - * The label of the prescription medication can serve as the written permission and instructions from the health care provider.*
 - The name and the strength of the medication
5. Over-the-Counter (OTC) medications should be kept in the original container as sold by the manufacturer, labeled with the child's name by the parent, and given according to the manufacturer's label. Make sure the medication is not expired.
 - Cold and cough medication is not recommended for children under 6 years old.
 - OTC products (such as sunscreen, insect repellent, sunscreen, etc.) should be kept in the original container as sold by the manufacturer, labeled with the child's name by the parent, and given accordingly to the manufacturer's label. Make sure the medication is not expired. Written parental permission is valid for up to 12 months.

6. All medications, refrigerated or un-refrigerated, should have child-resistant caps, be kept in an organized fashion, be stored at the proper temperature away from food, hazardous chemicals, and cleaning supplies, and should be inaccessible to children (preferably a locked cupboard/drawer/box). Emergency medications (ex. EpiPen) must be stored unlocked and out of children's reach for quick administration. Refrigerated medication should be placed on the top shelf of the refrigerator instead of inside the door so it is not easily accessible to children.
7. Check diaper bags/backpacks/cubbies for medications left behind by parents.
8. If a medication is to be given three times a day, the child care provider should only be required to give one dose. The morning and evening doses should be given at the child's home. If a medication is to be given twice a day, the child care provider should not have to give any doses. Both of the doses should be given at home, before and after care. Doses of medication need to be given at certain time intervals in order to treat an infection effectively.
9. Measure out medication for only one child at a time to prevent the following errors: contaminating one medicine with another, giving a child someone else's medication, giving the wrong amount, spilling the medication, giving a child who is not supposed to receive the medication the opportunity to help himself to a medication while the adult is busy giving medication to another child.
10. Always use the measuring device that comes with the medication from the manufacturer (if there is one) – such as the dropper that comes in the bottle of infant Tylenol (do not substitute other droppers to give Tylenol or use the Tylenol dropper to give other medications). For all liquid oral medications that do not come with a measuring device from the manufacturer, the parent/guardian must provide the administration device (medicine sip-vial, medicine cup, dropper, or syringe) with clearly marked measurements.
11. Measure liquid medications at eye-level. Make sure there are no air bubbles in the device that affect the measurement of the medication.
12. Rinse the device used to measure/give the medication with water and have the child drink the water to be sure the child gets the entire dose.
13. Infant drops are stronger or more concentrated than suspension medicine (ex. Tylenol). Be especially careful to check the amount of medicine you should give to prevent overdosing.
14. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is included in many OTC cough and cold medications. If more than one medication needs to be given to a child, be sure to check that no more than one of the medications contains acetaminophen to prevent an overdose. Acetaminophen overdose can cause acute liver failure in children.
15. When giving medicine to infants, use a syringe or oral dropper that has volume labels on it. Fill the device with the correct dose, and then squirt the medicine slowly into the inside of the infant's cheek. Wait for the infant to swallow each portion.
16. Never put medicine in a sippy cup or bottle filled with milk, juice, formula, etc. It is too difficult to know if the child got the entire dose. If parents ask you to make sure their child finishes a bottle or sippy cup that contains medication, explain to them that you cannot because you did not measure the medicine yourself. It is the responsibility of the parents to make sure their child finishes it.
17. When no longer needed by the child, or when the child withdraws from the program, all medications should be returned to the child's parent/guardian or disposed of after an attempt to reach parent/guardian.

Sources:

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