

How to keep medications and drugs safe at home

Wigan Safeguarding Partnership have partnered with We Are With You Wigan and Leigh (formerly Addaction) to put together guidance on keeping medications safe at home.

Over half the cases of poisoning in children are caused when they swallow medication or other substances. Young children are naturally curious and do not understand danger or the difference between a brightly coloured tablet and a sweet. Adults may also overdose if they take medication or substances in large amounts when they are not used to it.

Medications and substances safety checklist

**Take a look at our do's and don'ts to help keep medication, drugs and substances safe from babies and young children around the house.
Remember to always be extra vigilant.**

Do

- Lock all your medication, other substances / paraphernalia away from where children, teenagers or other people who may take them, can see them or reach them
- Clear up any spills or dropped doses immediately
- Make sure only you or other appropriate adults have access to the key(s).
- Leave the medication in containers with child-resistant lids or packaging - they are not 100% child-proof but will slow them down.
- Teach children not to swallow anything unfamiliar
- Take unwanted medicines to the pharmacy for disposal.
- Store and dispose of all injecting equipment and empty containers safely

Don't

- Don't keep medications on a high shelf. A high shelf is not enough of a deterrent as even small children can climb. Keep all medication locked away out of the sight and reach of children
- Don't keep medication (e.g. methadone liquid) in the fridge if possible, as people (such as children) may accidentally take it
- Don't take your medication or other substances in front of children
- NEVER give methadone to a child - as little as a teaspoon of methadone could kill a young child.

If a child swallows methadone, other medication, drugs or alcohol they could be seriously harmed or die.

How to dispose of medicine bottles

Often there can be small amounts of a drug left in the bottom of medicine bottles, this small amount could still cause harm if taken by someone else. Safe disposal of medication bottles is the responsibility of the adult who has taken the medicine or their parent or carer.

When disposing of medicine bottles:

- Remove the dispensing label and put in a bin
- Rinse out the bottle and either dispose safely in recycle bins or return to your pharmacy for disposal.

Emergency action

If you think a baby or child or someone else has swallowed any medication:

- Phone 999 for an ambulance to get urgent medical attention
- Take the medication container (and any remaining contents) with you, so the doctor knows what the baby, child or person has taken
- Do not try and make them sick - this may make things worse and if the person is unconscious, lie them on their side to make their breathing easier and to help stop them inhaling vomit if they are sick.

Further tips, information and advice

- [We Are With You Wigan and Leigh](#)
- [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents \(RoSPA\)](#)
- [Child Accident Prevention Trust](#)