

# Self-Care Corner

## Over-the-counter overdosing?

For a medicine to work for you—you've got to take the right dose. Many over-the-counter liquid medicines—such as pain relievers, cold medicines, cough syrups, and digestion aids—come with spoons, cups, oral droppers, or syringes designed to help you measure the right dose. To avoid giving too much or too little of a medicine, use these 10 tips from the FDA:

- **Always follow the directions on the Drug Facts label.** Read the label every time before you give the medicine.
- **Know the “active ingredient” in the medicine.** This is what makes the medicine work and it is always listed at the top of the Drug Facts label. Make sure, if you're taking more than one medicine such as to treat a cold and a headache, that both don't have the same active ingredient. You could be giving two times the normal dose. If you're confused, check with your doctor or pharmacist.
- **Give the right medicine, in the right amount.** Medicines with the same brand name can be sold in different strengths, such as infant, children, and adult formulas. The dose and directions also vary for children of different ages or weights. Always use the right strength and follow the directions exactly.
- **Use the dosage delivery device that comes with the medicine,** such as a dropper or a dosing cup. A different device, or a kitchen spoon, could hold the wrong amount of medicine. And never drink liquid medicine from the bottle.
- **Know the difference between a tablespoon (tbsp) and a teaspoon (tsp).** A tablespoon holds 3 times as much medicine as a teaspoon.
- **Know your child's weight.** Dosage amounts for some medicines are based on weight. Never guess how much to give your child or try to figure it out using instructions for the adult dose.
- **Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse** to find out what mixes well and what doesn't. Some medicines should not be taken with other medicines, vitamins, supplements, foods, and beverages.
- **Prevent a poison emergency by always using a child-resistant cap.** Relock the cap after each use. Be especially careful with any medicines that contain iron. They are the leading cause of poisoning deaths in young children.
- **Store all medicines in a safe place.** Some are tasty, colorful, and many can be chewed. Store all medicines and vitamins out of your child's (and your pet's) sight and reach.
- **Check the medicine 3 times before using.** First, check the outside packaging for cuts, slices, or tears. Second, once you're at home, check the label on the inside package to be sure you have the right medicine and that the lid and seal are not broken. Third, check the color, shape, size, and smell. If you notice anything unusual, talk to a pharmacist before using.