



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Keep methadone and other medications away from children

Lock medicines/drugs away where children cannot see or reach them

If your child swallows methadone, other medication, drugs or alcohol they could be seriously harmed or die. As little as a teaspoon of methadone could kill a young child.

- Over half the cases of poisoning in children are caused by them swallowing medication/drugs.
- Young children are naturally curious and do not understand danger. You can't expect children to understand the difference between a brightly coloured pill and a sweet, or between methadone and fizzy pop.
- When the pharmacist puts your medication – whether capsules, tablets or liquid – into a bottle, it will be supplied with a child resistant lid.
- These lids make it hard for children to open but they are **not** 100% childproof.
- It is therefore essential to keep medicines locked away where children cannot reach them.
- **Do not** put tablets and/or methadone in bottles without child-resistant lids.
- **Do not** keep methadone, tablets, drugs or alcohol where children can get hold of them.
- If you buy methadone and tablets off the street remember:
 - You cannot be sure of the strength or the purity.
 - They may not be in bottles with child-resistant lids.
 - If a child does swallow them you may not be able to tell the doctor exactly what they have taken.
 - Make sure you store it **safely**.

Emergency action

If you think a child has swallowed your medication

- Phone for an ambulance to get the child to the nearest Emergency Department (A&E) as soon as possible.
- Take the container of the medication (and any remaining contents) with you so the doctor knows what the child has taken.
- Do not try and make the child sick – this may make things worse.
- If the child is unconscious, lie them on their side to make their breathing easier and to prevent them inhaling vomit if they are sick.

Safety checklist

- **Do** lock all medicines / drugs away from children
- **Do** teach children not to swallow anything unfamiliar
- **Do** take old and unwanted medicines to the pharmacy to be disposed of
- **Do** store and dispose of all sharps and injecting equipment safely
- **Do** ask your local drug treatment service about safe storage boxes for methadone.
- **Do not** keep methadone in the fridge.
- **Do not** store unused methadone/medication.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Jo Pendennis, Substance Specialist MW, May 2011

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Based on a leaflet by Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board.