

# Poison Prevention Press

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## OTC Medicine Safety Online Resource

Scholastic, McNeil and the American Association of Poison Control Centers have updated their OTC medicine safety program.

[www.scholastic.com/otcmedsafety/](http://www.scholastic.com/otcmedsafety/)

This is a great resource for teachers, nurses, families and communities. It provides tools to promote OTC medicine safety in older elementary and middle school students. And it is free!

Children will learn about

- OTC medicines
- the drug facts label
- medicine measuring tools
- medicine misuse

It also includes a digital story book and an interactive online activity.

## Did you know that...

- In 2017, the MPC received approximately 600 calls about OTC pain relievers in 13-19 year olds?
- In 2017, the MPC received more than 160 calls about cold and cough medicine in 13-19 year olds?

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## OTC Medicine Safety for Tweens and Teens

Did you know that children begin to self-medicate as early as 11 years old? But, according to a nationwide survey, only 54% of tweens know over-the-counter (OTC) medicines can be dangerous when misused. Take steps to make sure you and your tweens and teens know how to use OTC medicine safely.

### About OTC Medicines

OTC medicines can be found in most homes. You can buy these medicines without a doctor's prescription and use them to treat minor medical problems, such as:

- Allergies and colds
- Headaches
- Skin rashes
- Stomach pains

Many people think that OTC medicines are safer than prescription medicine. **This is not true.** All medicines can be harmful if not used correctly. Tweens and teens need guidance from adults to help them use medicines the right way.

### Keeping Your Tweens and Teens Safe

The following tips can help your tweens and teens use OTC medicine safely:

- Always read the medicine label. This label provides important information, such as ingredients, dosage directions, warnings, and proper storage.
- Review the ingredients to make sure you aren't taking two medicines with the same active ingredient. For example, some cold medicines have acetaminophen to treat fevers and aches. But, acetaminophen is common in headache medicines as well.
- Follow the dosing directions on the label. Taking more medicine than recommended will not help your tween or teen feel better faster.
- Take product warnings seriously. Some OTC medicines can interact with prescription medicines. If your tween or teen is taking any prescription medicines, check with their doctor or pharmacist before taking an OTC medicine.
- Discourage sharing medicines with or taking medicines from others. Sharing medicine is dangerous. It can lead to allergic reactions or drug interactions. Most schools have strict rules about sharing and using medicine at school.
- Program the phone number for poison control in your tween or teen's phone. A quick and easy way to do this is to text "poison" to 797979. The contact can be easily saved and shared right away. Ensure tweens and teens know what the poison center is and how we can help them if needed.

Before you let your tweens and teens take medicine on their own, make sure you're comfortable that they will follow the safety tips above. Encourage them to come to you if they make a medicine mistake. If you or your tween or teen needs help with OTC or prescription medicine, our poison experts are available 24/7 by calling 1-800-222-1222. More information about OTC medicine safety can be found at [blog.mdpoison.com](http://blog.mdpoison.com).

