More Medicines in Your Home Mean Increased Poisoning Risks for Children [Infographic]

New Safe Kids Worldwide Report Uncovers Scope of Problem and Offers Solutions for Parents

Missoula, MT—The increase of medicines in the home since 1980 is staggering: Today there are three times as many prescriptions filled in the U.S. and five times as many dollars spent on over-the-counter medicines. With more medicine in the home than ever before, Safe Kids Worldwide is putting parents on alert to be vigilant about protecting their children from medicine poisoning.

Four School Busloads of Kids Go to the ER Every Day for Medicine Poisoning

The equivalent of about four school busloads of kids arrive at emergency rooms every day in the U.S. because a child accidentally got into medicine. That’s more than 59,000 kids each year. And almost every minute of every day, a call is made to a poison control center because a child got into medicine.

A new report released today by Safe Kids Worldwide, “The Rise of Medicine in the Home: Implications for Today’s Children,” explores the scope of the situation. While medicines play a vital role in treating disease, relieving symptoms and extending lives, they can cause serious harm to children who accidentally ingest them. Most families believe they are being careful about storing medicine away from children, but the alarming number of children being rushed to emergency rooms with medicine poisoning – one every nine minutes – demonstrates the need for families to stay vigilant in their efforts to protect their children from medicine poisoning.

“The good news is that education efforts are working,” said Kate Carr, president and CEO of Safe Kids Worldwide. “Since Safe Kids and industry and government partners started getting the word out to parents about the importance of keeping kids safe around medicine, the number of ER visits has steadily declined. But there are still too many kids getting into medicine, so education needs to continue to be a priority for all.”

Who is at Greatest Risk?

Toddlers, those adventure-seeking explorers, are the most likely to been seen in the emergency room for medicine poisoning. In fact, 1- and 2-years olds make up seven out of ten emergency room visits for medicine poisoning. Parents of toddlers need to be extra attentive to storing medicine where young children can’t reach them.

Where Are Kids Finding Medicine?

Parents are often surprised to learn where kids are finding medicine, like on the ground, in purses, in diaper bags, on counters, in reachable cabinets and in refrigerators. The same daily medicine boxes that make pill taking easy for adults are also easy for young children to get into. Safe Kids encourages families to look around the home to see unexpected places where medicine might be within the reach of children.
“Safeguarding our homes, our pets, and our children is important for everyone. The best way to do so is to always properly use medications, keep medications up and away, and to properly dispose of any unneeded, unused medications,” said Brandee Tyree, Missoula Forum for Children and Youth and Prescription Drug Task Force Coordinator. “Another interesting tip I just learned is that it’s not safe to keep “kid friendly” items such toothbrushes, toothpaste and Band-Aids near medications. Store these items separately so kids aren’t seeing the medications every time they use their daily items.”

**Whose Medicine Are Kids Getting Into?**
A review of ER records showed that almost half the time (48%), the medicine kids got into belonged to a grandparent and 38 percent of the time it belonged to parents. Both parents and grandparents need to be diligent about keeping medicine out of reach, even those they take every day.

“We’re asking every parent, grandparent and caregiver to take a look around their home to see where a child might be able to find medicine,” said Dannette Fadness co-coordinator of Safe Kids Missoula.
“Check purses, bags, nightstands, counters and even the refrigerator. You’d be surprised what young explorers can discover.”

**What Families Can do to Protect Kids**
- Check all the places where kids find medicine and **move all medicine up and away and out of sight.**
- Remember to **safely store all potentially harmful health products.**
- **Only use the dosing device** that comes with the medicine.
- **Write clear instructions** for caregivers about your child’s medicine.
- **Save the Poison Help line** in your phone: **1-800-222-1222.**

For more medicine safety tips, visit [SafeKids.org](http://SafeKids.org)

**National Poison Prevention Week is March 20 – 26, 2016.**

Download the [report](http://SafeKids.org) and [infographic](http://SafeKids.org) created with support from McNeil Consumer Healthcare.

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**About Safe Kids Missoula led by Foundation for Community Health**
Safe Kids Missoula works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the number one cause of death for children in the United States. Prevention Advocates engaged with Missoula Coalition include All Abilities Playground Missoula, American Red Cross, Buckle Up Montana-Missoula/Granite County Coalition, Community Medical Center, FedEx, Foundation for Community Health Robinson Endowment, Full Circle Counseling Solutions, Frenchtown Fire Dept., Infant Swimming Resource, Let’s Move! Missoula, Missoula Broadcasting, Missoula City-County Health Department, Missoula County Office of Emergency 911, Missoula Police Department, Missoula Fire Department, Missoula Rural Fire Department, Missoula Forum for Children & Youth, Montana Highway Patrol, Mom’s Demand Action for Gun Sense, Mountain Home Montana, Providence Saint Patrick Hospital, YMCA, and UM Athletic Training Program. Safe Kids Missoula is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Missoula was founded in 1991 and is led by Foundation for Community Health. For more information, visit safekids.org, fchwmt.org or choicesmattermissoula.com.

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1 Details about whose medicine was involved was only available for 26% of ER records.