

Keeping children safe from alcohol and drugs in the home

It is important to make sure that infants, children and young people are kept safe from alcohol and drugs that adults use and keep in the home. A number of children in the UK have died or nearly died as a result of adults exposing children to dangerous drugs. Over half of all poisoning cases in children are caused by them swallowing medication/drugs.

Please read this leaflet and discuss it with your healthcare professional.

Keep children safe

Children are naturally curious and do not understand danger. Alcohol and drugs may look very attractive to a young child. Don't expect them to know the difference between brightly coloured drugs or alcoholic drinks and sweets or fizzy drinks.

Methadone and other drugs

Even a very tiny amount of methadone can kill a child. If a child swallows methadone, they can stop breathing and they can choke on their own saliva or vomit because they cannot swallow when they are very drowsy or unconscious.

Please take these simple steps to store your methadone, and any other drugs that you have in the home, SAFELY.

- ✓ Put your drugs away as soon as you bring them home and every time after you use/take them. Always keep them out of sight and out of reach. Keep them in a high cupboard that can be locked or high up in a locked wardrobe.
- ✓ If you don't have a lockable cupboard or wardrobe, please buy a padlock or a lockable and unbreakable container like a cashbox.
- ✓ If you don't have somewhere to lock away your drugs, then make sure they are kept somewhere high up, where they cannot be seen or reached by climbing.

Prescribed medication like methadone and diazepam.

Make sure your pharmacist puts your medication – whether tablets, capsules or liquid - into a bottle with a child-resistant cap. These caps can save lives, but remember, they are not 100% child-proof, they can be opened – even by small children. Keep them out of sight and out of reach. Never store your drugs in a different container from the one you are given by the pharmacist. Always return any left over medicines to your pharmacist. Never keep them in the house.

Never – not even for a minute – leave drugs:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| ✗ On the floor | ✗ In a bag, handbag or coat pocket |
| ✗ Under a bed | ✗ In a child's bedroom |
| ✗ In the bathroom | ✗ Down the back of a sofa |
| ✗ On top of a table | ✗ In a car glove-box |
| ✗ In the fridge | ✗ Unattended when travelling with children |

Taking medicine and other drugs in the home

- ✓ When you take your methadone or any other medicine, make sure you take exactly the right dose.
- ✓ Avoid taking drugs in front of children.
- ✓ Put drugs away straight after use. Don't leave them on a table or work surface.
- ✓ If you accidentally spill your methadone (or any other drug), clear it up immediately. Wash any cloth or safely dispose of any paper towel you use for cleaning up. Just putting them in the bin may mean children are at risk as they could easily get them out again!
- ✓ When you finish your bottle of methadone or other medicine, remember to rinse out the bottle with water before disposing of it.

If you buy methadone or other drugs off the street remember:

- You cannot be sure of the strength or the purity - or even if it is the drug or medicine that you have been told it is!
- They may not be in bottles with child-resistant lids.
- If a child swallows them you and the doctor may not be able to tell what they have taken.

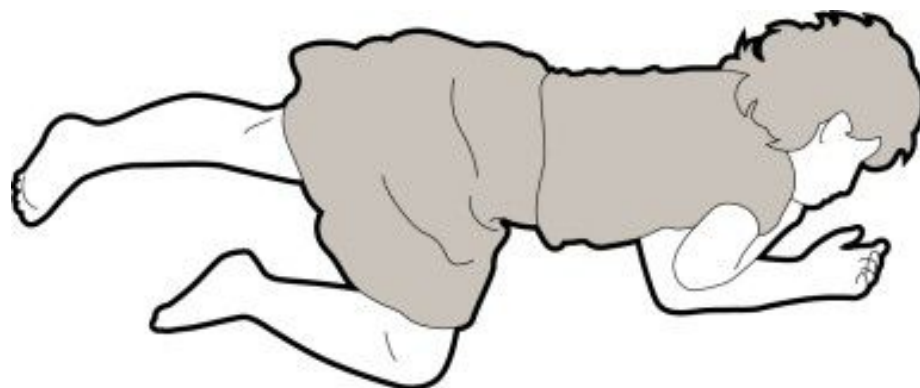
Talking to children about the dangers of drugs

If you have children, or look after children, talk to them about the dangers of taking alcohol or drugs or any medicine that's not for them. Keep all your medicines, drugs and alcohol 'out of sight' and 'out of reach' and tell your children never to touch any bottles of alcohol or medicine that are in the home. Tell children that if they ever take any drugs or alcohol by mistake to tell you straight away so you can help them.

What to do if a child takes drugs

If you suspect a child or young person has consumed alcohol or taken a drug by accident, lie them on their side in the **recovery position** (see picture below), **dial 999 straight away**, and stay with the child until the ambulance arrives to take them to the nearest accident and emergency unit. If possible, get someone else to call 999 while you stay with the child.

Tell the medical professional what the child has taken, how much, when, and how quickly (show them the bottle if possible). Do not try and make the child sick, and do not try and make the child drink if they are drowsy.



*Diagram reproduced from Great Ormond Street Hospital http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/families/first_aid/unconscious.html

To put someone in the recovery position, follow these steps:

1. Place the arm nearest to you at right angles to the body, elbow bent.
2. Bring the far arm across the chest, and hold the back of the person's hand against their nearest cheek.
3. Grasp the far leg just above the knee and pull it up, keeping the foot on the ground.
4. Keeping the hand pressed against the cheek, pull on the far leg to roll the person towards you onto their side.
5. Adjust the upper leg so that both the hip and the knee are at right angles.
6. Tilt the head back, and lift the chin forward, to make sure the person's airway (mouth and throat) remain open. If necessary, adjust the hand under the cheek to keep the head tilted.
7. Check person cannot roll forwards or backwards.
8. If the person has to stay in the recovery position for more than 30 minutes, turn them on their opposite side.
9. Keep an eye on the person's breathing and pulse.

Recovery position for an infant (babies less than 1 year old)

If an infant is unconscious but breathing,

- cradle the infant in your arms,
- place them on their side with their head tilted downwards to prevent them choking on their tongue or inhaling vomit.
- Dial 999 and check for vital signs – breathing, pulse and level of response until medical help arrives.



*Diagram reproduced from Great Ormond Street Hospital http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/families/first_aid/unconscious.html

Safety checklist - important things to remember:

- ✓ Store drugs safely in the home – locked away, out of sight, out of reach
- ✓ Avoid taking drugs in front of children
- ✓ Do not put medicines in bottles without child-resistant lids
- ✓ Teach children about the dangers of medicines/drugs/alcohol that are not for them
- ✓ Never give children drugs like methadone – you will endanger their life
- ✓ Take old or unwanted medicines to a pharmacy for safe disposal
- ✓ Store and dispose of injecting equipment safely
- ✓ Keep this leaflet safe and read from time to time.

Always discuss storing your medication/drugs/alcohol safely with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, health visitor or midwife. They will help you plan how to store substances safely, and will talk to you more about the information in this leaflet so that you can KEEP CHILDREN SAFE.

Keeping children safe from drugs in the home

Injecting drugs – risks to children

You need to make sure that others are not put at risk by the unsafe use and disposal of injecting equipment.

- ✓ Children should never witness you or others injecting drugs.
- ✓ Children do not have the same understanding of danger as adults do. They may not be frightened of seeing needles or works, and they may attempt to pick them up or touch them.
- ✓ If you or someone else is injecting drugs in the home, keep the sharps bin (cin bin) in a locked secure place out of reach and out of sight of children.
- ✓ Make sure all injecting equipment is put away as soon as you get home and disposed of, or put away, immediately after you use it. Keep your equipment in a high cupboard that can be locked or high up in a locked wardrobe.
- ✓ Warn children never to touch needles and syringes. If you find them on the street or in your neighbourhood – do not pick them up. You can call your Local Council 'Environmental Health' Department to ask for uplift.

Safe disposal of injecting equipment

All used equipment can be disposed of in a sharps bin, this includes: needles, filters, swabs, tissues, spoons, foil, crack pipes, Citric and Vitamin C sachets, water amps etc. The sharps bin can then be returned to your local needle exchange or pharmacy.

Needle-stick injury

It is important to be aware of the risks caused by infections which can be passed on in the blood by injecting or by a needle-stick injury. **HIV, hepatitis C, hepatitis B** and other infections can be passed on this way.

Emergency action – needle-stick injury

If you think a child has jabbed themselves with a needle, you should:

- ✓ Encourage bleeding by squeezing the site of the injury
- ✓ Wash thoroughly with soap and water
- ✓ Cover up with a plaster to prevent germs from entering the wound
- ✓ Seek medical attention immediately. Don't panic, but it is important that they get checked out as quickly as possible as they may need treatment.

Safety checklist - important things to remember:

- ✓ Store drugs safely in the home – locked away, out of sight, out of reach
- ✓ Avoid taking drugs in front of children
- ✓ Teach children about the dangers of drugs that are not for them
- ✓ Never give children drugs like heroin – you will endanger their life
- ✓ Store and dispose of injecting equipment safely
- ✓ Keep this leaflet safe and read from time to time.

Always discuss safe storage of equipment with your health professional. They will help you plan how to store equipment safely, and will talk to you more about the information in this leaflet so that you can KEEP CHILDREN SAFE.