

# Dr. Laura Jana Offers Parents Five Key Ways to Ensure Accurate Dosing of Liquid Medication to Infants



*Esteemed pediatrician and author helps parents cope with the confusion of dosing and giving medication to their children*

All too often, parents forget to handle with care the everyday medications we give our children, especially when it comes to the readily available over-the-counter medications. The recent infant cold and cough products recall serves as a frightening, but important reminder that no medicine comes without risk.

*Dr. Laura Jana, accomplished pediatrician, author, and mother of three, acknowledges parents' natural instinct to try and make their children feel better when they're sick, but warns that overdosing can cause serious side effects. Here she provides five important ways parents can ensure accurate dosing of medication for their infants and young children:*

**1**

## **Children are not simply little adults.**

Never assume that adult medications are OK to give to children. What is recommended for treating adults is not always approved for use with children. Not only can dosing and frequency of use vary significantly, but children may also be at risk for unwanted side effects not experienced by adults.

**2**

## **Weight matters.**

Too much of a medication can be very harmful, while too little may prove ineffective. While medications approved for use in adults and older children typically offer dosing instructions by age, what's most important for accurate dosing of medications given to young children (especially those under the age of 2) is their actual weight. Given that weight can change significantly over relatively short periods of time at this age, parents should always talk to their doctor or pharmacist before administering medication to their children to make sure they're giving the right amount.

**3**

## **Treat symptoms only as needed.**

It's important that parents don't over treat their children by using medications designed to tackle an all-encompassing list of symptoms. If a child has a horribly runny nose and a hacking cough significant enough to warrant treatment, then it's best to use medications made to treat those specific symptoms. Also, be sure to continue to use them only for as long as they are truly necessary.

**4**

## **Coping with rejection.**

Let's face it, some medicine - both over-the-counter and prescription - doesn't taste so good. And even when it does, young children who don't feel well are prone to spitting it out, throwing it up, or simply rejecting it altogether. While it may be tempting to try and mask the taste by mixing the medication directly with other liquids in a child's bottle, unfortunately, parents are all-too-often left guessing how much medication has actually been absorbed when children fail to finish drinking it. Since repeat dosing runs the real risk of an overdose, it's critical to discuss with your child's doctor before offering a second dose, and better yet - getting it right the first time.

**5**

## **Contact Your Doctor or Pharmacist.**

Remember, you're not a doctor. You're a parent. Rely on credible sources, such as your pharmacist and child's pediatrician, to make sure you always get the right medication for your child's symptoms, the right amount of medication for your child's age and weight, and that you are giving it to your children the right way. Doctors and pharmacists can give you additional valuable information, such as which medications should not be mixed with other liquids, so you can make sure the medicine you're giving is not only necessary, but that it is going to be safe and effective as well.

As we head into yet another cold and flu season, remember to ask yourself (and your child's doctor) if over-the-counter medications are really necessary before getting them off the shelf. If your child is eating and playing normally, and you find yourself having to chase him all around the house in order to give him something to treat his symptoms, the odds are in your favor that he's probably going to be OK without it. Just as adults don't always need medicine to make them feel better when they're sick, the same rules apply to kids. As a parent, always remember to ask yourself: "Does this [runny nose] bother me more than it actually bothers my child?" If so, a tissue may be all the treatment you need.