

Medicine Safety in the home...

Research shows that children begin to self-medicate around 11 years old. Yet only 54% of tweens know over-the-counter (OTC) medicine can be dangerous when misused (Crux Research). Commonly used things such as Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Advil/Motrin (ibuprofen) can cause problems. Tylenol can be hard for the liver to metabolize and can damage it with overuse. Advil/Motrin, which should be taken with food, can cause GI distress and stomach ulcers if overused. Aleve (naproxen) can also cause GI distress and stomach ulcers with overuse. It is important to teach your children who are learning to self-medicate how to read labels and to take medication properly according to the package directions.

For those with very young children medications might be a cause of poisoning. Keep medications out of reach of young children. Please be aware that Grandma or another visitor might have medication in her purse or elsewhere that a child could gain access to.

Prescription medication should only be taken by the person for whom it was prescribed. Antibiotics should be taken according to directions and finished completely so that all the harmful bacteria are killed and should never be used for another person. On the rare occasion there are leftover antibiotics they should be disposed of properly. Both the Lakeville and Freetown Police departments have medication disposal boxes in their lobbies.

With the current opioid crisis in the US, household medicine safety is especially important. Narcotic pain relievers (Percocet, Vicodin, Oxycontin, etc) should only be taken as prescribed and any extras should be disposed of in the police department disposal box. Research shows that most persons with heroin addiction started with pills and some 75% of these got the pills from the medicine cabinet of a relative or from a friend.

In addition some ADHD medications and some anti-anxiety medications have enough potential for abuse that they should be given to students by their parents. If the student is old enough and trustworthy enough to self-medicate at home this process should still be checked on periodically by the parent.

As always please call the nurse in your school if you have any questions about medicine safety in your home.