

Side-effects from children's medicines

This leaflet gives information about side-effects from children's medicines. It will support you in discussing with your doctor or nurse any concerns you have about your child's medicine.



This leaflet has been written for parents and carers about medicines in children. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

What is a side-effect?

Medicines are important in preventing and treating children's illnesses, but sometimes they can cause problems. For example, medicines can sometimes make people feel sick or cause an itchy rash. This is called a side-effect.

A side-effect is an unwanted reaction or symptom caused by taking a medicine. You may have also heard this called an 'adverse drug reaction'. A side-effect may happen straight away, or it may happen a few days or weeks after your child has taken a medicine.

Can I be certain that a medicine has caused my child's symptoms?

Often it is difficult to be certain whether a medicine has definitely caused a side-effect. This is because a child's symptoms could be due to an illness or another cause. If your child is taking lots of different medicines, it can be difficult to pinpoint which (if any) medicine or medicines may have caused the symptoms. This uncertainty can be very frustrating for parents, children and health professionals.

To work out what might be causing your child's symptoms, here are some questions that you and your child's doctor or nurse might discuss:

- When did you first notice the symptoms?
- Is there anything else that might have caused the symptoms?
- Has your child ever had symptoms like this before?
- Are the symptoms a known side-effect of the medicine?

Risks and benefits of children's medicines

All medicines can have side-effects but it is important to balance these against the benefits of medicines. No one wants a child to miss out on a medicine when the benefits of taking it are greater than the side-effects. If your child has had a mild side-effect, she or he might still be able to keep taking the medicine. If they have had a serious side-effect, then you and your child's doctor will want to discuss other options, such as changing the dose, stopping the medicine or switching to a different medicine.

Questions to consider asking your doctor or nurse

If your child has had problems after taking a medicine, it is natural to have concerns and questions.

Here are some questions you might want to ask your doctor or nurse:

- How certain is it that my child's medicine has caused a side-effect?
- Should my child stop taking the medicine?
- Will somebody record this side-effect in my child's medical notes?
- Will my child ever be able to have the medicine again?
- Will my child have any long-term problems due to any side-effects?
- Will my other children get similar side-effects if they need to take the same medicine?
- Is there an alternative medicine that my child could take?

Will there be a record of my concerns?

You can ask your child's doctor to record any concerns about your child's medicines in his or her medical records. If the doctor recommends stopping the medicine, he or she will usually put an alert in your child's records. This will tell other health professionals that your child should not have the medicine.

If you think your child has had a side-effect to a medicine, you should mention this next time your child sees a doctor or nurse.

Reporting side-effects to the medicines safety 'watchdog'

The Medicines and Health Care products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) watches out for side-effects. Anyone can report a side-effect to the MHRA via its Yellow Card Scheme:

- Website – <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard>
- Freephone – 0800 100 3352 (10am to 2pm Monday-Friday only)

The Yellow Card Scheme acts as an early warning system to



identify new side-effects and get more information about other problems which might not have been known about before. If a new side-effect is found, the MHRA will review the way that the medicine can be used, and the warnings that are given to people taking it to minimise risk and maximise benefit to the patient.

Where can I find out more information?

It is important to read about possible side-effects when getting a new medicine.

Detailed information about side-effects is given in the leaflet for each medicine on the Medicines for Children website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk.

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



This information is co-produced by:



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The primary source for the information in this leaflet is the British National Formulary for Children. For details on any other sources used for this leaflet, please contact us through our website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk.

We take great care to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is important that you ask the advice of your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure about something. This leaflet is about the use of these medicines in the UK, and may not apply to other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading this leaflet.