

AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Ditch the kitchen spoon when measuring kids' medicine

Using kitchen spoons to measure liquid medicine should be a thing of the past, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

"They are notoriously inaccurate," said Dan Frattarelli, M.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Committee on Drugs.

A study at the Cornell Food and Brand Lab found that when participants tried to measure a teaspoon of medicine, they were off the mark. With one size spoon, participants poured an average of 8% less than prescribed. With another size, they poured an average of 12% more than prescribed. Though this may not seem like a large mistake, a small problem over time can turn into a big one.

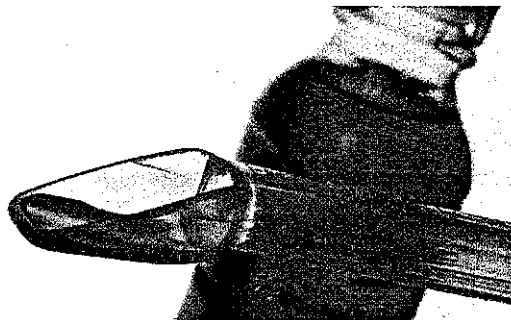
"If the medicine builds up in the system, the child may become toxic and if the medicine is inadequate, it may not deliver the intended result," said Randall Bond, M.D., FAAP, a member of the AAP Section on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention. "Most people have not experienced it because it's not a frequent problem, but when it occurs it can be very harmful."

Pediatricians recommend asking the pharmacist for a measuring device when picking up a prescription.

"Always use the dosing device that comes with the product. Don't try and substitute something else," Dr. Bond said.

The AAP also recommends the following when administering medicine to children:

- Try to stay as close to the recommended dosing schedule as possible. Ask pharmacists or physicians how much wiggle room is appropriate for specific drugs.



- Measure medication before bed to avoid mistakes while tired in the middle of the night. Then store medicine in the refrigerator until it's time to administer, and an exact dose will be waiting.
- If your child hates the medicine's taste, ask the pediatrician if there is a better-tasting drug. For many bad-tasting medicines like oral steroids, there may be a slightly more expensive version with a more bearable taste.

— Heather Waldron