



Just How Safe is Grandma's House?

Today's grandparents are much healthier and are living much longer than their parents and much of this is due to the availability of today's medications. Chronic pain, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes can be treated with more effective medications today; however, they can be toxic to children. Accidental poisonings from medicine cause more emergency room visits for young children each year than do car accidents.

Every minute of every day a poison center receives a call about a potential medication poisoning for a child less than 5 years of age. One preventable reason may be that grandparents store their medications within reach of their grandchildren. 64,000 times a year a young child goes to the emergency room for a medication poisoning and 38 percent of the time the child got into a grandparent's medication.

According to a study, nearly 1 in 4 grandparents told researchers that they store their medications out in the open within reach of children or in easy-to-open containers. Grandparents were four times more likely to report that they leave medications within easy reach of children than parents were.

Older adults use more medications than any other age group in the United States. This group comprises 13% of the population but accounts for 34% of all prescription use. The medications that older adults take often consist of dangerous prescription medications where even one pill could kill a small child.

Last year the Nebraska Regional Poison Center received over 1,000 calls from panicked grandparents after their grandchild took one or more of their medications.

Here are some tips to help keep your grandchildren safe:

- Don't keep medications on nightstands, kitchen tables or counters. Keep them locked up and out of sight.
- Children often imitate adults so take your medications when the grandchildren aren't watching.
- Use child resistant caps when possible – there is no such thing as child –proof containers.
- Keep track of your medications – remember that older grandchildren may be looking for prescription medications to abuse.
- Get unused, unwanted and expired medications out of the house. The poison center can help you with that.
- Have the number to the poison center (1-800-222-1222) programmed into your phone or in a prominent place for easy access. We are here 24/7.