When you and your baby are ready to leave the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), doctors may prescribe medicines to give your baby at home. Here are a few tips to help you make sure you are ready to give medicine safely.

**Before you leave the hospital, check and double-check.** Hospitals are advised to provide patients (or their parents) with a complete list of medicines the patient will be taking after discharge, as well as instructions about how to take the medicine.* When you are prescribed medicines to take home with your baby, health care staff are advised to ask you to repeat the instructions they give you about the medicine. It also is a good idea to carry a list of your baby’s medicines with you at all times. If you need to seek urgent care for your baby, having this list handy is very helpful to doctors.

Mistakes with medicines are one of the most common types of medical errors.** These errors have a higher risk of causing harm in babies than in adults. Babies are at higher risk when taking medicines because:

- most medicines are made for adults, so they have to be prepared in a special dosage and/or formula for babies
- a baby’s body is less able to process medicines (especially if the baby is very small and/or ill)
- babies cannot tell you when they feel ill due to a medicine, so parents often don’t know if the medicine has certain side effects

A time to be extra careful with medicines is when your baby changes doctors, is admitted to the hospital, transferred to another hospital, or is referred to a different type of doctor for certain health problems. These often are called *transitions* in care. It is helpful to have an updated list of your baby’s medicines that you can give to his or her doctor at these times. Hospital staff are now advised to check your list against any other medicines that might be prescribed for your baby.*

**Giving your baby medicines at home: what can parents do?** Studies show that parents are more likely to make a mistake when giving medicine to an infant or toddler, than when giving it to an older child.* The effects of medicines vary with every baby, mainly because the dose given is based on the baby’s weight. If your baby was born early and/or with a low birth weight, medicine dosages will differ from those given to healthy, full-term infants of the same age. A key safety step for parents is to make sure you are always giving your baby the correct dose and giving it exactly as prescribed by his or her doctor or nurse.


Brought to you by Pediatrix Medical Group through The Center for Research, Education and Quality. To learn more, visit: pediatrix.com/forparents
© 2011 MEDNAX Services, Inc. All rights reserved.

*Take great care of the patient*™
Here are a few more helpful safety tips:

Things to know about your baby’s medicines:
- what it is and what it does
- amount to be given
- timing for each dose
- how to give the medicine
- side effects to be aware of
- where to find help if you have questions
- the name of the medicine (the brand name and the generic name)
- what to do if your baby vomits the medicine

Phone 911 if your baby needs urgent treatment.

- Read all of the information you are given about the medicine. This includes reading the package label. If there is anything you don’t understand, always ask the doctor or nurse.
- Always talk to your baby’s doctor if you have questions or if you are confused before stopping any medicine or changing the dosage advised. If your baby has a severe reaction to the medicine, phone 911.
- You may be given a device (a small cup, spoon or dropper) to measure the medicine dose. Use only this device when you are giving the medicine to your baby. If you were not given a device to measure the dosage, find out if you need one.
- Do not give your baby any other medicines until you have checked with his or her doctor. This includes any medicines for which you do not need a prescription.
- Do not give your baby’s medicine to his or her siblings or to any other child.

My baby’s medicines

Baby’s name: ___________________________ Date: __________ Current weight: __________

My baby takes this medicine (circle one) morning afternoon bedtime

Name: _____________________________ for this reason: _____________________________

I give my baby this amount: _____________ by

I give it to my baby (circle one)
before meal with meal after meal

My baby takes this medicine (circle one) morning afternoon bedtime

Name: _____________________________ for this reason: _____________________________

I give my baby this amount: _____________ by

I give it to my baby (circle one)
before meal with meal after meal

Take a closer look at these Pediatrix topics

discharge - E1 - Going home with your baby: about the discharge process

*Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. For Parents: Young Children and Adverse Drug Events. From www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ps_forParents.html#q3

E2 - Medicine(s) for your baby at home

This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult with a health care professional if you have any questions about the health of your baby.