Many children in child care settings will need medication. Some will need medication for a short period of time, like when they have a cold or to prevent infection in a cut. Others may need a daily or ongoing dose to treat a condition like a food allergy or asthma. To keep children safe and healthy, child care providers must ensure that all medication is received and administered in the correct manner. Careful, thorough, continual communication keeps parents aware of medication policies and procedures, and can reduce stress when medication must be administered in a child care setting.

At Enrollment

Parents must be given clear, written center policies regarding medication administration during enrollment. This includes forms and instructions, licensing standards, training guidelines for staff, field trip policies, and emergency procedures. Take adequate time to fully explain your center’s policies and answer all questions that parents may have. Help parents think through potential issues, like ensuring they have enough medication for both home and child care, and how to address potential side effects like nausea, drowsiness, or hyperactivity.

Time of Prescription

Parents are most likely to provide caregivers with new prescriptions and medications during the busiest times of the day, such as drop-off and pick-up times. Make sure that you have enough time with the parent to fully review the medication and to make certain that every item on your center’s medication checklist is correctly addressed. Items on the checklist should ensure:

- Authorization forms are properly signed and dated.
- Medication is in the original container, with the child’s name (first and last) on the label.
- Medication is labeled with a start date, end date, and expiration date, dosage and storage instructions, and prescribing healthcare professional’s name and contact information.
- Possible side effects are properly documented.
- The medication administration log includes information, such as the date, time, dosage, and child care provider’s name.
- Instructions are included for off-site administration, such as field trips and possible evacuations.
If a child's medication requires specialized equipment, such as a syringe or a nebulizer, take the time with parents to practice using the equipment. When possible, talk with the child while her parents are present about when and how medication will be administered. When children see that both parents and their caregiver are working to keep them healthy, they may feel less anxious when medication is first given. Encourage parents to come to the school and administer the medication themselves if a child feels especially nervous or scared. As always, keep a detailed log of any medication administered at your center.

**Throughout the Year**

Ongoing communication during parent meetings, handouts, and center gatherings helps to address common mistakes on forms or prescriptions, especially during times of increased illness like cold and flu season. Always give parents the opportunity to address any unclear or confusing policies and consider revisions to your procedures as needed.