**OTC LITERACY**

**UNDERSTANDING THE LABEL**

*Drug Facts* help you understand the medicines that you take and how to take them safely. All medicines should be taken with the direct supervision of a parent or trusted adult.

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**ACTIVE INGREDIENTS**
The ingredients in the medicine that make it work.

**WARNINGS**
Safety information, including side effects, the questions you should ask a doctor before taking the medicine, and which medicines to avoid using at the same time.

**OTHER INFORMATION**
How to store the medicine.

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**MEASURE IT RIGHT**

To get an exact measurement it is important to only use the dosing device that is provided with the medicine. The *Drug Facts* label tells you how much medicine you should take based on your weight and/or age.

**FACT:**
Household spoons come in various shapes and sizes, which means they hold different amounts of liquid.

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**KNOW WHO TO ASK**

Always talk with a parent or trusted adult to learn more about the responsible use of all medicines. Other resources include doctors, nurses, and pharmacists as well as your local poison center.

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**DIRECTIONS**
Indicates the amount or dose of medicine to take, how often to take it, and how much you can take in one day.

**USES**
Describes the symptoms that the medicine treats.

**INACTIVE INGREDIENTS**
Ingredients not intended to treat your symptoms (e.g., preservatives, flavorings).

**QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?**
Call the company if you have questions about a specific medicine.

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**IN 2012, America's poison centers managed over 296,000 exposure cases involving children ages 6 to 19. Over 50% of these cases involved medication errors and misuse.**

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**DID YOU KNOW**
that poison centers are staffed with experts, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and toxicologists, who can help answer general questions about medicines or can provide help over the phone if you come in contact with a poison? Program the Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222, into your phone.
Overall Grade for Tweens on Over the Counter Medicine Literacy & Safety

ONLY 37% of the questions were answered correctly when asked how to use OTC medicines responsibly.

ONLY 56% of the questions were answered correctly when asked about the differences between prescription and OTC medicines.

ONLY 53% of the questions were answered correctly when asked how to read a Drug Facts label.

ONLY 49% of the questions were answered correctly when asked about the safe storage of medicine.

National survey conducted by Crux Research
Statistics based on national survey issued to 1,100 sixth graders
New Research Study Shows that Tweens Get a Failing Grade in OTC Medicine Safety

National survey results reveal that only about half of tweens believe over-the-counter medicines can be dangerous when misused

NEW YORK (October 29, 2014) – American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) is continuing their commitment to help educate tweens on the safe use of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines with their national OTC Literacy education program created together with Scholastic. Research shows that tweens begin to self-administer medicine around 11 years old, or in the fifth to sixth grade. In 2012, America’s poison centers managed more than 296,000 exposure cases involving children ages six to 19 and over half of these cases involved medication errors and misuse.¹

In order to measure and compare the level of OTC medicine safety awareness among the nation’s tweens and their parents, two national surveys were conducted – one to 1,100 tweens and the other to 600 parents. Results show that parents often overestimate their tween’s knowledge about OTC responsible use, such as the risks associated with not taking OTC medicine as directed.

Specifically, tweens answered just 37 percent of questions correctly when asked how to use OTC medicines responsibly. Only about half, or 54 percent, of tweens surveyed know OTC medicine can be dangerous when misused. On the flip side, parents tend to overestimate their tweens’ knowledge, believing their tweens know who to ask if they have a question about medicine (75 percent), whether or not it’s okay to share OTC medicine with friends (73 percent) and the risks of not using OTC medicines as directed (68 percent).

When asked about the differences between prescription and OTC medicines, tweens answered just 56 percent of questions correctly. Sixty-seven percent of tweens surveyed incorrectly believe they can use someone else’s prescription medicines if he or she has the same symptoms. Parent assumptions of tween knowledge was similar to tween test results, with 58 percent believing their tween would understand the difference between prescription and OTC medicines.

When tested on how to read a Drug Facts label correctly, tweens only answered 53 percent of the questions correctly. Just 31 percent of tweens surveyed know it is not safe to take more medicine than what is directed on the label. And, 50 percent of parents admit they don’t believe their tween knows how to read a Drug Facts label on an OTC medicine.

Tweens correctly answered only 49 percent of questions relating to safe storage of medicines. Fifty-two percent of parents surveyed admit they don’t believe their tween knows how to safely store medicines.

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The surveys also revealed the level of importance that medicine safety education holds among parents. While OTC literacy is viewed by parents to be as important as wellness topics, such as exercising or maintaining a healthy diet, they don’t believe it’s as important as other health topics, such as the dangers of smoking, drugs or alcohol.

“I see it every day in my practice – tweens often begin to self-medicate around middle school,” says Tanya Altmann, M.D., F.A.A.P., a pediatrician and child health expert trained at the University of California, Los Angeles. “It’s very important for parents to teach their tweens to always read and follow the instructions on the label, use the dosing device that comes with the medication and always store medications up and away from younger siblings.” She adds, “These survey results are another reminder that medication safety and education are such important topics, especially for tweens who are starting to become more independent.”

Parents play a critical role in helping their tweens learn about the responsible use of OTC medicines. The vast majority of parents surveyed were unsure if OTC-related issues are taught in their tweens’ school. Since National Health Education Standards, which include OTC literacy lessons, are not required to be taught in U.S. schools, it is important for parents and guardians to educate and teach the safe use and storage of OTC medicines with their tweens.

“Scholastic is pleased to be partnering with AAPCC on this important program,” shares Ann Amstutz Hayes, senior vice president, Scholastic National Partnerships. “Together we are supporting educators, school health professionals and families with interactive multimedia tools and resources that have been proven to help teachers and their students. OTC Literacy is specifically tailored to meet the needs of these teachers and students to increase knowledge on the important topic of OTC medicine safety and to drive positive behavior change.”

Successfully launched in schools nationwide in 2013, the OTC Literacy program includes resources and engaging educational activities specifically designed for parents and teachers of tweens to increase knowledge of OTC safety and responsible use. The program places special emphasis on the message that tweens should only take OTC medications with the permission and supervision of parents or guardians. Educators and parents can download all of the materials online at www.scholastic.com/OTCliteracy/parents.

About AAPCC
The AAPCC promotes the nation’s 57 poison centers and supports their efforts to prevent and treat poison exposures. Poison centers offer free, confidential medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the Poison Help Line at 1-800-222-1222. This service provides a primary resource for poisoning information and helps reduce costly emergency department visits through in-home treatment. To learn more, visit www.aapcc.org, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or read our blog at aapcc.wordpress.com. To join your voice with other poison center supporters, register for the AAPCC advocacy network at www.capwiz.com/aapcc – click on “Action E-List.”

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