Giving Medication to Children

You know the personalities of the children in your program. Use this knowledge when you give medication to help keep the process safe.

General Principles of Medication Administration
When giving medication:

- Always act confidently and let the child know you expect cooperation.
- After giving the medication, thank the child.
- Remember, what works for one child may not always work with another, so be flexible.
- Talk to parents about how they get their child to take medication and try to follow the same routine when possible.

Sometimes you cannot safely get a child to take medication.

- **Never yell at, threaten or restrain a child in any way in order to get her to cooperate.** Never force a crying child to take medication.
- If you cannot give the medication safely to the child, call the child’s parent.
- Remember to write down why you didn’t give the medication in the child’s log.

Here are some tips for safely giving medication to the children in your program:

**Infants**
- Talk in a calm, soothing voice.
- Listen to relaxing music.
- Rock the baby before and after giving any medication.
- Give medicine prior to a feeding, unless the health care provider’s instructions specifically state to not give before a feeding.
- Don’t add to formula or breast milk.

**Toddlers**
- Use age-appropriate language.
- Never call medicine “candy” or “candy-flavored” (e.g., pink amoxicillin “bubble gum” flavored medicine)
- Let the child cuddle a toy.
- Give the toddler some control, such as, “What color cup do you want to use?”
- Practice giving medicine to a doll or stuffed animal.
- Plan for time before and after giving the medication to soothe the child.
Preschoolers
- Prepare the child to take the medication.
- Have the child think about a favorite place or thing to do while taking the medication.
- Give a choice, such as, “What do you want to play with after?”

School Age Children
- Prepare the child to take the medication.
- Help the child relax by having her imagine a favorite place or take deep breaths.
- Have the child take an active role in the medication-taking process.
- Give as much control as possible.
- Allow the child to express feelings about having to take the medication.