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UN releases first-ever guidance to improve use of medicines for children



A young girl taking medicine

18 June 2010 – The United Nations World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) issued today its first-ever guidance on how to use more than 240 essential medicines for treatment of children aged 12 and below.

“To be effective, medicines must be carefully chosen and the dose adjusted to suit the age, weight and needs of children,” said Hans Hogerzeil, director of essential medicines and pharmaceutical policies at WHO .

“Without a global guide, many health-care professionals have had to prescribe medicines based on very limited evidence.”

Some countries have developed their own formularies, but this is the first comprehensive guide for medicines used around the world.

The WHO Model Formulary for Children provides standardized information on the recommended use, dosage, adverse effects and possible complications for medicines taken together.

For example, the formulary lists the pain treatment drug ibuprofen can have negative interactions when taken with any one of 21 listed medicines, and should only be given with or after food.

The new formulary is based on information from around the world as to which medicines should be used to treat specific conditions, how they should be administered and in what dose.

Accurate dosing of medicines for use in children is essential, particularly those below 12 months, where a dosing error can have devastating results, WHO warned.

During the development of the formulary, WHO said it noted a number of areas where more research is needed, such as child appropriate antibiotics to treat pneumonia and specific medicines for neonatal care.

WHO also noted the need to review cases where several drugs are combined in one pill, such as for treatment of malaria or HIV.

One anti-malarial and two antiretroviral drugs to treat children with HIV are currently on the market.

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