



Making Safe and Healthy Choices: Understanding Medicine

GRADES 2–3

55 MINUTES

Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces the importance of using medicine safely. Students explore why people take medicine, examine symbols on medicine labels and identify safe and unsafe items through brainstorming, small-group work and class discussions.

Essential Questions

- What are some reasons people take medicine?
- What can make medicine and other substances helpful or harmful to my body?
- How can my trusted adult help me make safe choices about substances?

Student Learning Goals

- I can name two examples of why people take medicine.
- I can describe basic safety rules for medicine.
- I can tell the difference between helpful and harmful substances.
- I can make choices that help me stay safe.

Related Standards

Health Standards

2.SUB.3 Describe safety rules for over-the-counter and prescription drug use.

2.SUB.1 Identify the difference between medicine to help people who are sick and other substances harmful to the body.

3.SUB.4 Describe how and where to access help from trusted adults if substances are being misused or abused.

Transformative SEL Standards

Standard 2. Self-management and Agency Use management strategies to build personal and collective agency that lead to achieving goals and aspirations.

STANDARD 5. Responsible Decision-making and Curiosity Demonstrate curiosity and awareness of oneself and society to make caring choices that impact personal, social, and collective well-being across situations and environments.

Lesson Materials

- Slide deck
- Whiteboard, poster paper or a digital way to record student responses
- Paper and pencils for students or digital space for writing sentence stems

Lesson Plan

Preparation

Prepare lesson materials. The slides offer different items for students to sort. Decide which items are familiar to your students.

Learning Sequence

Activity 1. Activate Prior Knowledge: Why do people take medicine? | 5 minutes

1. Welcome students and share the essential questions (Slide 2) and learning goals (Slide 3).
2. Ask students to share why people take medicine (Slide 4). Examples might include
 - Medicine helps prevent people from getting sick.
 - Medicine makes people feel better when they are sick.
 - Medicine helps keep people's bodies working well.
3. Record additional answers on their whiteboard, poster or digitally.
4. Repeat the process.
5. Ask students to share some rules they know for taking medicine safely (Slide 5). Examples might include
 - Ask a trusted adult.
 - Only take the amount it says on the package.
 - Only take medicines your parent or guardian or healthcare provider tells you to.

Activity 2. Explore New Learning: What is on a medicine label? | 10 minutes

1. Project the enlarged image of a medicine label (Slide 6).
2. Explain that you will be working on understanding medicine labels so medicine can be taken safely.

3. Explain that it is helpful to follow directions on medicine labels and harmful not to. For example, the label may say to avoid taking a medicine that makes you sleepy if you're going to be doing active things like riding your bike.
4. Ask students what they notice about the medicine label (Slides 7 and 8).
5. Ask students to turn to a partner and share what they see. Listen for key information like the name of the medicine, the directions and warnings.
6. Ask students how the information on medicine labels can help them take medicine safely (Slide 9). Reinforce the following ideas:
 - A trusted adult needs to give them the medicine.
 - Following medicine label directions makes medicine helpful instead of harmful.

Activity 3. Deepen Content Knowledge and Engage in Learning: Safe, Unsafe, Safe Only If Used Correctly | 20 minutes

1. Explain that students will sort items into three different categories.
2. Define the categories and share a hand motion for each item (Slides 10 and 11).
 - Safe (thumbs up): These are items you can use or consume without worry.
 - Unsafe (thumbs down): These are items that are harmful to children.
 - Safe, only if used correctly (thumbs to the side): These are items that can be safe with adult help.
3. Share an example (Slide 12). Show an apple and ask where it goes and why. Then, show a bottle of bleach and ask where it goes and why (Slide 13).
4. Ask the class to sort the items on the slides (Slides 14–22) into categories and share their reasoning.
5. Listen to the answers and ask guiding questions:
 - What could happen if you use this the wrong way?
 - Who might help you decide how to use this safely?
6. For items like vitamins and toothpaste, emphasize that eating toothpaste or taking too many vitamins could be unsafe.
7. Ask students to think of 2–3 items from their home and explain what category they would put them in and why. Offer the sentence frames (Slide 23):
 - I chose the substance _____.
 - _____ is safe, unsafe or safe only if used correctly because_____.

Activity 4. Apply New Knowledge: Looking at Real-life Scenarios | 15 minutes

1. Remind students what they learned about how to stay safe around these items. Reinforce that if you are unsure, it is important to ask a trusted adult.
2. Explain that sometimes we can be unsure about how to keep ourselves safe. Discuss things that could happen in real life and think about a plan to keep everyone safe.
3. Group students in pairs or small groups. Ask them to decide what to do in the following scenarios:
 - You find a small pill on the floor at home, and you are not sure where it came from (Slide 24).
 - Your friend has something that looks like candy, but it smells weird and doesn't have a wrapper. They want to try it (Slide 25).
 - You see a bottle of medicine in your bathroom cabinet. It smells sweet, and you want to try it (Slide 27).

Activity 5. Review Key Lesson Takeaways | 5 minutes

1. Review the lesson's essential questions (Slide 27) and learning goals with students (Slide 28).
2. Ask students to turn to a partner and share one action they can take to be safe with medicine (Slide 29).

Formative Assessment Opportunities

Listen and Look For

1. Listen for student responses. Use this as an opportunity to correct misconceptions that come up. Paraphrase students' contributions as needed.
2. Observe students while they are working in small groups. Ask probing questions to support student thinking.

Resources

- Oregon Poison Center: <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-poison-center>