

Pilot study looks at medication safety in US homes

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Nearly 30 percent of homes with young children have acetaminophen products stored unsafely, and nearly all homes included at least one expired medication, according to a research abstract presented Monday, Oct. 17, at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference and Exhibition in Boston.

Children under age 6 have the highest rate of unintentional poisoning, and [acetaminophen](#) is the leading cause of [acute liver failure](#) in the U.S. In the [pilot study](#), "Acetaminophen and Expired Medication Storage in the Home," researchers sought to determine whether or not acetaminophen was being stored unsafely in American homes, and whether unexpired medication was available.

The medication and storage practices of 24 families with children ages 2 to 6 were observed and documented, including where and how their medications were stored, if these medications contained acetaminophen, and whether they were expired. Safe storage was defined as medications placed above 5 feet, or below 5 feet and locked.

Acetaminophen was found in 23 of the 24 homes, and all homes had at least one expired medication. A total of 22 percent (174 of 799) of all medications and 30 percent (30 of 99) of acetaminophen-containing medications were stored unsafely.

"Acetaminophen is highly toxic when taken above therapeutic levels, and the hazards of consuming expired medications are unknown," said lead

study author Lindsey Asti, of the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital. "The improper storage of these products is a concern for homes with young children because unfortunately, the rate of unintentional [poisonings](#) in this population is high."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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