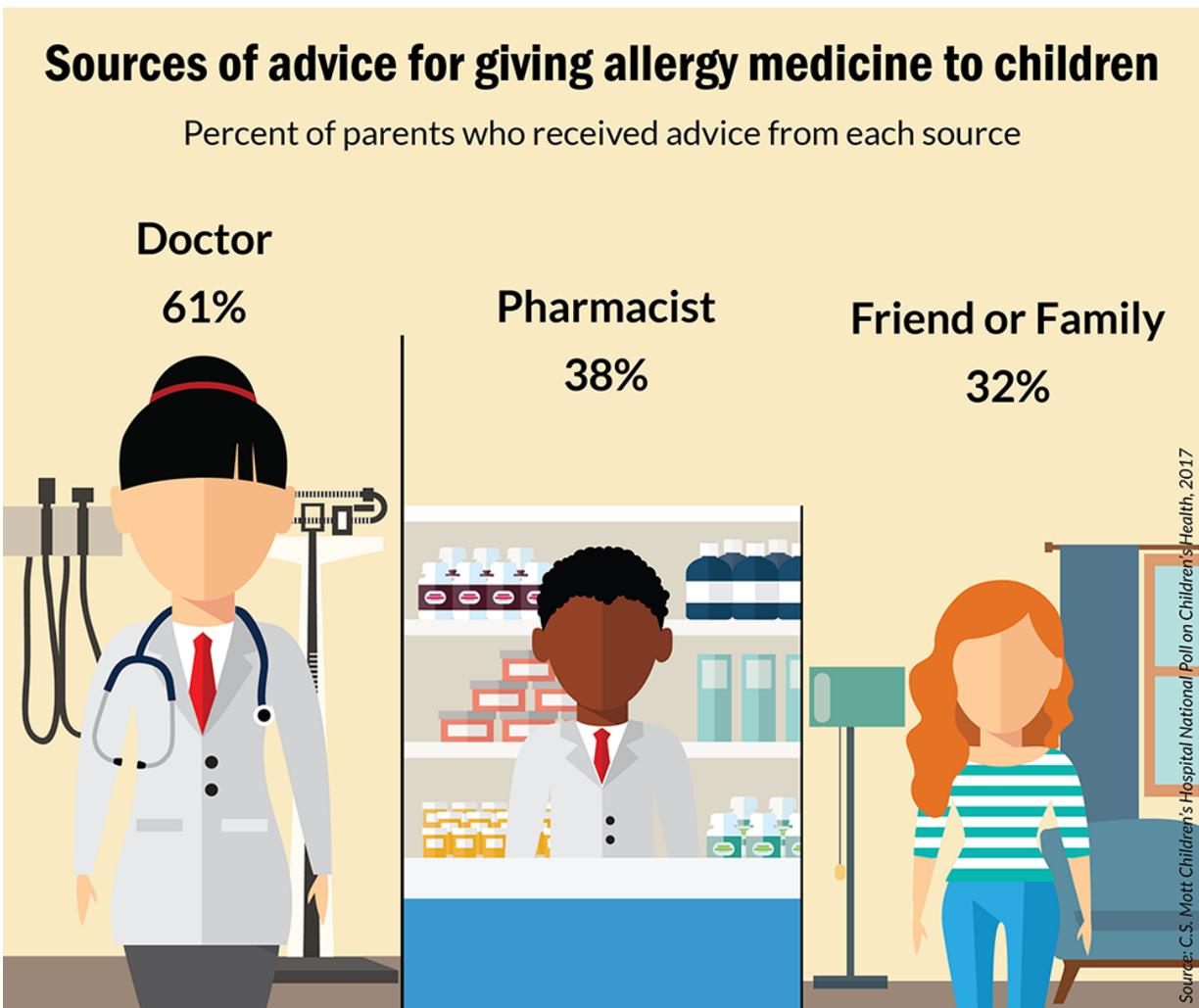


Parents struggle with choosing allergy medicine for their children

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Who parents say they receive allergy advice from. Credit: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Tulips, songbirds and itchy little eyes—all are sure signs of spring.

As allergy season kicks into high gear, many [parents](#) are likely searching for over-the-counter medications to help relieve children of symptoms like sneezing, coughing and congestion.

But dosing, labeling and a seemingly endless range of allergy medication options can make picking the right [medicine](#) a complicated task for some parents, suggests today's report from the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at the University of Michigan.

"Parents often face an overwhelming selection of allergy medicine without clear guidelines on how to choose the right one for their child," says poll co-director and Mott pediatrician Gary Freed, M.D., M.P.H.

"Some parents may be picking allergy medication based on their interpretation of different advice they've heard, which may not always be accurate."

The Mott poll report is based on responses from a national sample of 1,066 parents of children ages 6-12 who were asked about experiences with giving children over-the-counter allergy medicines. Over half had given allergy medicine to their school-aged child in the past year.

The majority of parents (85 percent) who gave children allergy medicine used medication they already had in the house, with one in five (18 percent) not checking the expiration date first.

"While outdated medicines are unlikely to be dangerous, they may have lost some of their effectiveness," Freed says.

Most parents used allergy medicines labeled for children, but one in

seven (15 percent) have given their child over-the-counter allergy medicine labeled for adults. A third of those using adult medications gave their child the dose recommended for adults while two-thirds gave a partial adult dose.

Adult medicines often contain the same ingredients as those packaged specifically for kids but do not always have pediatric dosing instructions.

"If taken as directed, over-the-counter allergy medicines are safe and effective for children, but parents should be very careful to give their child the correct dose. Doses greater than recommended for [children](#) can result in more severe side effects," Freed says.

Freed advises parents to read the ingredients on the box to help them shop for the best priced option that fits their child's needs. A good rule of thumb is to match a child's symptoms to the medicine included in the product. For example, antihistamines can help with runny nose and itchy eyes while decongestants help with a stuffy nose.

Doctors are parents' top source for advice about allergy medicine (61 percent) but almost a third of parents (32 percent) say they turn to a friend or family member and 38 percent ask a pharmacist. Overall, 21 percent of parents report that it is hard to figure out the right dose of allergy medicine for their child.

"If parents are unsure how to navigate [allergy medication](#) choices, they should always check with their child's health care provider," Freed says.

Provided by University of Michigan

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