

Too much medicine: nebuliser, antibiotics and antipyretics

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If the cases in which children aren't given the medicine prescribed by the doctor out of fear are rare, in most cases the Italian children population faces the exact opposite problem: **children take too much medicine, which, in most cases is not necessary or too strong for them, especially antibiotics and remedies against respiratory problems.** This was reported by the Italian Pharmaceutical Agency (AIFA), to which the paediatricians of the Bambino Gesù hospital in Rome answered with the latest issue of "A scuola di Salute", a small guide to the correct and informed usage of medicine, in order to challenge fears and old myths.

A child is not a baby adult

Too often children are given, with a lower dosage, medicines prescribed for adults (off-label prescription). Children, however, are not baby adults and **the medicine, which had been clinically studied on the adult population and therefore authorised only for adults, may not be suitable for children**, which have a different metabolism and weaknesses.

A baby is not a school-aged child

For the same reasons, it happens that a child, who two years prior was cured with a certain drug, may undergo the same therapy without checking beforehand the diagnosis and the dosage with the paediatrician. This is also dangerous, because children, during their growth experience different development phases, each one of them marked by variations in the way drugs are absorbed and

metabolised.

Antibiotics are not antipyretics

Among the most common mistakes, independently giving antibiotics to a child in case of a fever is one of them. However, the appropriate drugs for treating a fever are antipyretics (paracetamol and ibuprofen), which also act as painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs, whose dosage depends on the weight of the child.

Antibiotics, on the other hand, are used for tackling bacterial infections; however they are completely ineffective against viral infections. The symptoms can be similar (fever, fatigue, diffused pain), but paediatricians have the suitable equipment and knowledge to differentiate the cases, therefore consulting a doctor is essential, to decide if the antibiotics are necessary and for the dosage and the treatment, to which the patient must comply once the treatment has begun.

Nebuliser

Another common trend is to treat every respiratory problem with the nebuliser. However, **it is ineffective against colds, ear infections and coughs, unless they are caused by a bronchospasm** (bronchial constriction) or **severe laryngitis**. The nebuliser can be used in case of asthma, to tackle an **asthma attack** or to prevent it, if the paediatrician considers it appropriate.

Pharmacovigilance

During the administration of drugs, it is important that the effectiveness and the potential side effects (of which everyone must be aware of) are constantly monitored.

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