

to drugs. When a dose is ordered that is outside the usual range or when there is some question regarding the preparation or the route of administration, the nurse should check with the prescribing practitioner before proceeding with the administration, because the nurse is legally liable for any drug administered.

Even when it has been determined that the dosage is correct for a particular child, many drugs are potentially hazardous or lethal. Most facilities have regulations requiring specified drugs to be double-checked by another nurse before giving them to the child. Among drugs that require such safeguards are antiarrhythmics, anticoagulants, chemotherapeutic agents, and insulin. Others frequently included are epinephrine, opioids, and sedatives. Even if this precaution is not mandatory, nurses are wise to take such precautions. Errors in decimal point placement may occur and may result in a tenfold or greater dosage error.

Identification

Before the administration of any medication, the child must be correctly identified using two identifiers (e.g., name and medical record number or birth date). With an infant, young child, or nonverbal child, the parent or guardian (if present) can verify the child's identity. After verbal verification of the child's identity (by the parent, guardian, or child), the ID band should be verified using two identifiers. Bedside computers to scan the ID bracelet for electronic record updating may also be used.

Preparing the Parents

Nearly all parents have given some type of medication to their child and can describe the approaches that they have found successful. In some cases, it is less traumatic for the child if a parent gives the medication, provided that the nurse prepares the medication and supervises its administration. Children being given daily medications at home are accustomed to the parent's functioning in this capacity and are less likely to fuss than if a stranger administers the medication. Individual decisions need to be made regarding parental presence and participation, such as holding the child during injections.