



Pharmacology, Health Briefs

Health Brief: Children not always given smallest pills to swallow

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

- Jacobsen L, et al. *Pediatr Drugs*. 2016;18:65-73, <http://bit.ly/1QJpJnd>.

Pediatric tablets and capsules vary widely in size, and pediatric inpatient pharmacies don't always stock the smallest, a study found.

"These results show that the sizes of medications vary greatly, and physicians and pharmacists should take into account as many factors as possible to help children successfully comply with a medication regimen," researchers said.



In 2010, roughly 263.6 million pediatric outpatient prescriptions were written in the U.S. to manage an array of medical problems. However, some children and adolescents struggle to swallow pills.

Researchers looked at the 15 most frequently prescribed tablets and capsules and found many come in a variety of sizes.

Acetaminophen 500 milligrams ranged in length from 5 to 22 millimeters with a median of 15 millimeters, the study said. Common antibiotics ranged from 8 to 25 millimeters with a median of 18 millimeters.

The team performed an audit of an inpatient children's hospital pharmacy and found many of the tablets and capsules in stock were not the smallest manufactured.

Researchers also looked at costs and found capsules typically were cheaper than tablets. They also compared conventional tablets to chewables. In the case of amoxicillin/clavulanate, chewables cost almost 10 times more than conventional tablets.

The authors recommended physicians, pharmacies and pharmaceutical manufacturers think carefully about the size of tablets and capsules they provide children.

"We hypothesize that improving medication adherence could potentially lead to a reduction in hospital readmission rates or even peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) placements if there were fewer treatment failures or concerns about compliance with an oral antibiotic course," they said.



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