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Medicines Education Portal provides information about correct use of medicines

Medicines education is about teaching children how to use medicines correctly. The Medicines Education Portal www.laakekasvatus.fi provides ready-to-use teaching material to comprehensive school teachers to be used in environmental studies and health education. The website also contains general information on medicines and typical childhood illnesses for us all. On the website, pupils can play the TroppiOppi

game designed specifically for them. Alongside the Finnish language version, a version in Swedish and a limited version in English are also available. The website is maintained by the Finnish Medicines Agency Fimea.

Why should children be taught the correct use of medicines?

Medicines are an essential part of health care. Everyone has to use

them at some stage of their life, and sometimes the use of medicines may even be vital.

Already when children begin school, they often have attitudes and beliefs of medicines and their use, based on everyday experiences. They may have a reserved attitude towards medicines, and even fears of using medicines. Therefore, children should learn that they benefit from medicines most when using

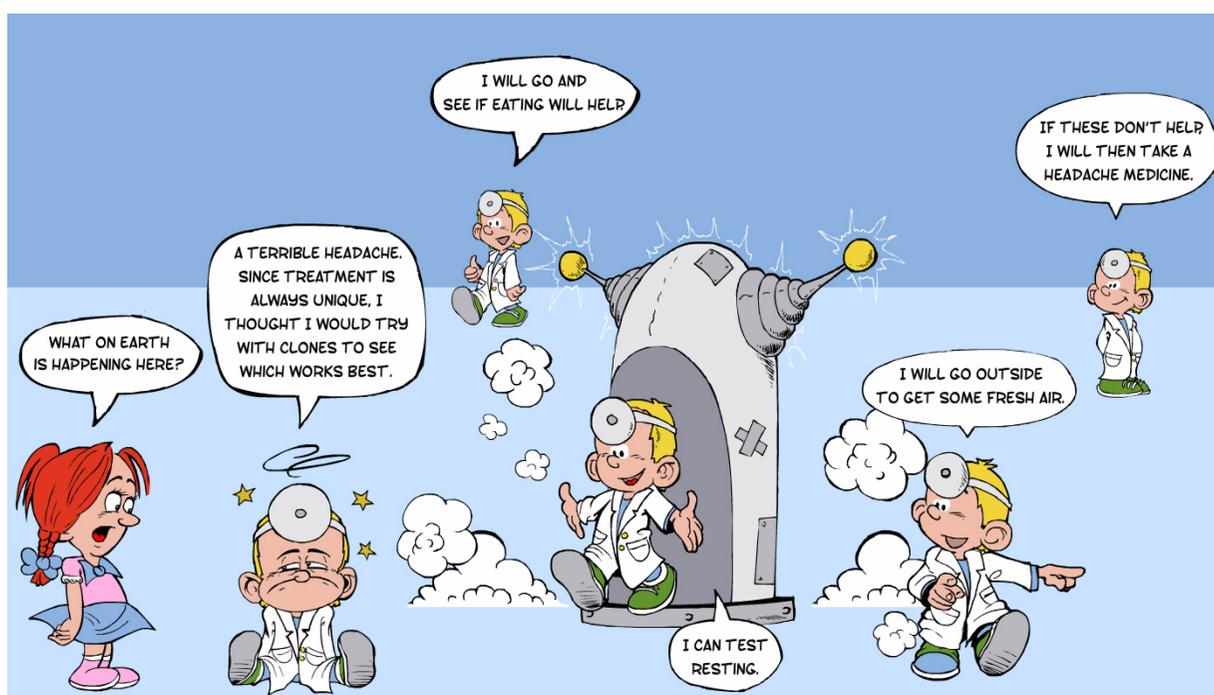


Illustration: Tommi Bäckgren

The Medicines Education Portal is aimed at encouraging children to be active and ask if they have any questions about their medication.

them appropriately and that it may be possible to avoid their adverse effects.

The most important messages of the Medicine Education Portal to children are:

- Before beginning to use a medicine, find out the most appropriate treatment for your ailment. Medicine is not always required.
- Before beginning to use a medicine, find out how you must take your medicine. Even a simple course of tablets involves many things that must be considered.
- Know your own illnesses and conditions (e.g. allergies) and their possible effects on medicine use.
- Be active and ask if you have any questions about using a medicine or about your health!

Who is the Medicines Education Portal intended for?

The Medicines Education Portal is intended to support comprehensive school teachers in medicines education. The educational videos and other material on the website can be utilised in upper secondary education as well. There is also content for children and their parents.

– We have been involved in developing Fimea’s Medicines Education Portal on the basis of research results. Many of the learning assignments on the website are based on an SSI system that links the learning content naturally to pupils’ everyday life, making the matters studied meaningful for them. We have introduced the learning assignments on the website to teacher students and utilised the exercises in class teacher training. In our experience, the Medicines Education Portal is suitable for teaching environmental

studies, biology and health education between years 1 and 9 of comprehensive school.

Anu Hartikainen-Ahia and Sirpa Kärkkäinen, School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education, Philosophical Faculty, University of Eastern Finland

What kind of information does the Medicines Education Portal contain?

The portal contains ready-to-use ideas for assignments and learning entities for comprehensive school teachers. The material is suitable for different age groups. The assignments for education between years 7 and 9 can also be applied to secondary education, for example in general upper secondary schools. The website also provides all of us with basic information on what is a medicine and how to use our medicines correctly. In addition, there is information about typical childhood illnesses.

The website offers school children TroppiOppi, a game in which they can be virtual doctors and cure the different ailments of the TroppiOppi patients. They can consider what to do, for example, when they have a headache or their temperature is rising, and reflect on the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating.

– A few years ago when I was a pharmacist, I did a medicines education session with pre-primary children. It was easy and convenient to base my visit on ready-to-use, high-quality material that was appropriate for the children’s age. Now that I own a pharmacy myself, I have been planning medicines education for the local pre-primary children together with my staff. The idea is that the pupils would then make a visit to the

FURTHER READING

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pharmacy. We are also working on the possibility to provide medicines education for the residents of the reception centre situated locally. **Anna Nurmi**, owner of Punkalaidun pharmacy ●