

Kid-friendly chocolate formula helps the medicine go down

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Credit: University of Western Australia

Researchers from The University of Western Australia have developed a winning medicine formula that makes bad-tasting medicine taste nice, making it easier to treat sick children.

The UWA study published by the journal *Anaesthesia* tested 150 children and found that the majority of children who were given the new chocolate-tasting [medicine](#) would take it again, unlike the standard treatment, while they still experienced the same beneficial effects.

UWA Clinical Senior Lecturer Dr Sam Salman said the poor [taste](#) of many medicines, such as Midazolam, a sedative used prior to surgery, presented a real difficulty in effectively treating children.

"Many children struggle with taking medicine, including medicine used at the time of surgery that has an extremely bitter taste that is often hard to mask," Dr Salman said.

"This can result in distress for the sick child, their parents and the healthcare team and ultimately risks reducing the effectiveness of medicines and ongoing poor health. A medicine no matter how powerful will not be effective if a child refuses to take it."

"Unfortunately though, creating a nice tasting medicine is not as simple as melting a chocolate bar and putting it into medicine. It requires a skilfully crafted formula that can mask the taste, have a long shelf life and not reduce the effect of the medicine, amongst other things."

The UWA team, including formulation specialist Professor Lee Yong Lim and paediatric anaesthetist Professor Britta Regli-von-Ungern-Sternberg, say the successful formula could be rolled out to patients.

"The study shows the success of this new formula, with five times more children liking the taste of chocolate form, which is also supported by parents and nurses," Dr Salman said.

After the success of the initial trial, a second medicine using the new formula is showing similar positive preliminary results with ongoing trial

at Perth Children's Hospital with a plan to develop other medications including antibiotics.

Other benefits of the new formula include its accuracy in dosing compared to liquid medicines, the ability for it to be chewed or melted for [children](#) with swallowing difficulties and its long storage life without refrigeration.

The team is now looking for industry partners to help take the new medicine formula to the world.

"Our hope is that this formula could result in child-friendly medicine becoming universally available and remove a common struggle when it comes to treating [sick children](#)," Dr Salman said.

More information: S. Salman et al. A novel, palatable paediatric oral formulation of midazolam: pharmacokinetics, tolerability, efficacy and safety, *Anaesthesia* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/anae.14318](https://doi.org/10.1111/anae.14318)

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