



## MANAGING YOUR MEDICATIONS

Drugs are generally divided into two large classes which include *prescription* drugs and *over the counter (OTC's)* drugs. Over the counter medications include multivitamin and mineral supplements, cough and cold preparations, pain relievers, acid reducers, herbal products, dietary supplements, topical products and many more. All medication must be carefully and thoughtfully considered prior to taking and storing.

### SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Keep an accurate list of all personal medications, including over the counter preparations. List the name of each drug, dose and how often it is taken. List all known allergies.
  - Present this list every time you go to see any health care provider.
  - Keep the list in a purse or wallet and post on your refrigerator to make it easily accessible for emergency responders.
- Unless you are using a carefully monitored pillbox, keep medicines in their original container with the original labeling. Read the label and examine the medication at every dose. Know what your medicine should look like. If a pill or capsule looks different than a previous dose of the same medicine, contact your doctor or pharmacist immediately.
- Ask the doctor or pharmacist about how each new medication might affect other personal medicines, including herbal supplements, pain relievers and vitamins, as these OTC's may be harmful when used with prescription medications.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if it is safe to drink alcoholic beverages while taking medications.
- Get prescriptions refilled far enough in advance to avoid running out.
- Child *resistant* caps on medicines are not child-*proof*. Keep ALL medicines out of reach of young children and teens.
- Keep medicines at a stable temperature and humidity. Avoid storing them in bathrooms where temperature and humidity levels can vary.
- Store medications out of direct sun light.
- Unless required, do not store drugs in the refrigerator.
- Never take someone else's medication and never give your medication to someone else.
- Talk to your doctor about how to safely discard expired medication or medicines you are no longer taking.
- Always take your prescription medicine at the specified time AND for the entire duration of time it is prescribed. Follow manufacturer directions explicitly for taking ALL over the counter medication.
- Be informed about purchasing drugs abroad: potency, counterfeit, accurate labeling, tampering, and substitution.
- Keep the WI Poison Center phone number near a phone: **1-800-222-1222**.

## **MEDICAL OFFICE VISITS**

- Be prepared. Make a list of questions/concerns prior to any medical visit.
- Ask questions. Know why you are taking a medicine and how it affects the body.
- When cost is a concern, ask your doctor about prescribing generic drugs.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or are nursing.

## **PHARMACY VISITS**

- Whenever possible, use only one pharmacy to streamline medication management. A Pharmacist will review your prescriptions for interactions, allergens and appropriateness.
- Notify your pharmacist of any adverse reaction to a past or recently prescribed medicine. These reactions include: fever, rash, swelling, bleeding, coughing, muscle weakness, itching or any other unusual sign or symptom.
- Always bring your current prescription insurance card with you.
- Wisconsin law requires pharmacies to counsel patients on every prescription whether it is a refill or a new prescription. Counseling may include a review of the labeled information, common uses, common side effects, special storage requirements and what to do if a dose is missed. Obtain written information about each new drug you are taking.
- Always check to make certain you have the correct drugs before you leave the pharmacy. Ask questions if you have any concern.

*Adapted by: Hales Corners Health Department*

*Sources:*

*Wisconsin Poison Center, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin*

*John Kolesari, RPh, Froedtert Hospital*

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