

Understanding the How's and Why's of Taking Your Meds

... April 1-7 is Medication Safety Week *By Daniel Schlosser, MD*

When used properly, medications are generally safe and intended to treat specific ailments. Their proper use includes taking only medicines your doctor prescribes, taking them as directed, knowing the names of your medications, storing them properly and keeping them out of the reach of children.

This sounds simple but can become complicated very quickly. The fact that each drug has both a brand and generic name makes it hard enough. Safely taking medication becomes even more complicated if you see more than one doctor, take more than one medication, or have to take medications multiple times per day.

Misuse of medications and errors in taking them is the sixth leading cause of death. Therefore Women's Heart Foundation has organized Medication Safety Week to raise awareness about the medications each person takes and encourage communication with one's healthcare providers including both doctors and pharmacists. As a physician, I strongly encourage patients to ask

questions about their medications and clarify any concerns about why you are taking the medication and how it should be taken.

Even over-the-counter medications can pose risks. Just because a medication does not need a prescription, does not mean it can't be dangerous. Even simple medications such as Ibuprofen can interact with medications such as blood thinners and increase risk of bleeding. Decongestants such as Sudafed, pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine, which are common in cold medicines, should not be taken if you have heart disease or high blood pressure.

Start by Cleaning Out Your Medicine Cabinet: Get rid of medicines you no longer use and those that are out of date. Keep all medications out of reach of children. Some medicines such as pain pills may need extra security such as a locked drawer or safe.

Know Your Medications: Learn the names of your medications and alternative names such as a brand. Keep a list of all your medications with you

at all times as you never know when you will need it. This is particularly important if you have more than one doctor.

Read the Labels and Follow Directions. Errors can happen if you take the medication too often, or not often enough. Avoid herbal and dietary supplements as they can interact with some medications, sometimes increasing or decreasing their potency.

Keep your medications organized. Pillboxes can be useful to organize the medications you are taking and remind you to take them each day.

Be particularly careful when transitioning care such as changing doctors, going to the hospital or being discharged from the hospital as this is a common time for errors to occur.

Being aware of your medications, why you are on them, proper doses, and why changes are made to them is important and can help to prevent medication errors. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Did you Know?

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Darry Johnson, MD – Neurology
John Tassone, DPM – Podiatry

Each of these specialists offer weekly blocks of appointment times at our 9150 W. Indian School Rd. Suite 118 location while audiologist Dr. Deborah Blaylock sees patients there monthly. Schedule by calling 602.938.6960.



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