Medication Safety Week is April 1-7

Cleaning Out Your Medicine Cabinet

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Rev. 2/03, Rel date 11/2003. Revised for Healthy Heart Network Communities© 09/2004
Objectives

• Raise awareness of medication errors being between the 5-7 leading cause of death and how to avoid a possible mishap at home
• Promote personal responsibility for one’s own health and safety with taking medications and supplements
Take Inventory

• Be sure all items are in their original container so no one takes the wrong ones.
• Check the packaging. Products in damaged containers should be thrown out because they can become contaminated or decompose.
• Restock supplies that are low or missing.
Toss Out

• All expired products
  – Look for date on product’s label or stamped on the tube if it’s an ointment or cream
  – Even first aid kits have expiration dates
• Dump unused prescriptions products even if they haven’t expired
  – Don’t share these with family and friends
• Appetite suppressants with ephedrine or ma huang
Storage Is Key

• Improperly stored medications can lose their effectiveness *before* the expiration date
• Heat and humidity can affect the potency of medicines
  – Bathroom cabinets are not always ideal
• Read storage recommendations carefully
• Keep medicines in their original container
Ideal Storage Place

• Cool, dry, and dark place
• Protected from direct sunlight
  – Amber colored prescription bottles reduce the amount of light that reaches the medicine
• Out of reach of children
  – Consider products with child-resistant caps if there are children in the home
  – Consider locking the cabinet
Reading OTC Labels

- Know active ingredients and purpose
- **How** and **when** to take it
- Will the drug interact with other medications I am taking?
- While taking the medicine, should I avoid certain foods, alcohol, or certain activities like driving?
- **Warnings** - when not to use the medicine, when to see a doctor, and possible side effects
Medicine Cabinet Preparation

• Pain relief (acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and aspirin)
• Allergy and sinus relief (antihistamine, decongestant, pain reliever)
• Cold and flu relief (antitussive and expectorant)
• Digestive health (anti-diarrheal, anti-gas, and acid reducer)
• First aid items (antiseptic, bandages, guaze, adhesive tape, and antibiotic cream)
Protect Against Tampering

• Read the label for the product’s tamper-evidence features

• Look at the package for tampering signs such as broken seals, puncture holes, or open or damaged wrappings

• Never take medicine that is discolored or has an unusual odor
Dosing

• Products with the same active ingredient may have different strengths
  – Tylenol® for infants is more concentrated than children’s Tylenol® elixir

• Splitting medicines
  – Long-acting medicines are specially coated and should not be split
  – Splitting tablets can lead to inaccurate dosing
  – Purchase pill cutter if necessary
Dosing

• What is a dropperful?
  – Lots of variation
  – Use only the dropper that has been supplied with the product

• Dose cups that come with nonprescription medicines are unique for each product

• Teaspoon vs. Tablespoon
  – Oral syringes are more accurate than kitchen appliances
Other Tips

- Use only one pharmacy if possible
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of the medications you take (prescription and over-the-counter)
- Request a medicine bag check-up and counseling
- Request written information from your doctor or pharmacist
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FOCUS DAYS:

1. Clean out your medicine cabinet day
2. Know your medicines awareness day
3. Read medicine labels carefully awareness day
4. Dietary supplements awareness day
5. Organize your medicines awareness day
6. Transitional care awareness day
7. Better communication with health professionals awareness day
Medication Safety Matters

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Founded 1986. Incorporated June 11, 1992