

Safe Dosing, Storage and Disposal of Medications: Keep Your Home Safe From the Leading Cause of Poisoning In Young Children

Every day thousands of people are prescribed medications or take medications that may be bought over the counter. It is crucial to be careful when taking prescription and over-the-counter medicines, herbal preparations, and supplements. While medications are useful in helping to aid symptoms of illness, they may be dangerous if incorrect dosing, storage, or handling are not properly followed. In mid-March, we celebrate National Poison Prevention Week and it is important to look at some safety tips for handling and administering at home medications.

1. Ensure proper storage of medications and check for expiration dates.

Proper storage of medication is essential in ensuring that medications remain safe and effective.

Medications that are not properly stored may increase the risk of harm or not working properly, even if they are not expired. Medications come with information for specific storage some may need. Most medications should be stored up and away, in a cool and dry environment and out of sight and reach, especially of young children. If medication is stored in a busy environment, such as the kitchen cabinet, care should be taken to keep all medications up and away from children or in a locked box. Children are at risk for accidental poisoning from medications due to most medications looking like candy. Young kids learn and explore their environment by putting things in their mouths and medications are no exception.

2. Take medication as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

Take medications on a regular schedule according to your healthcare provider's instructions. Missing, skipping, or stopping a dose of medication may lead to decreased effects of the medications. This may include the use of antibiotics; many individuals start to feel better prior to the end of the course of their medication and often quit taking them. It is crucial to finish all prescribed medications to ensure the infection is adequately removed from the body.

3. Be aware of medication side effects and potential medication interactions.

It is important to understand potential side effects of medications. Ask your healthcare professional about any potential side effects, and if any steps can be taken to avoid side effects with medications. One recommendation may be taking the medication with food to avoid stomachache or nausea with medications. Medical professionals can also provide written information about prescription medications. This information will help to understand minor and serious side effects. When side effects do occur it is important to report them to your healthcare provider, as dosing or medication changes may be needed.

4. Know where to discard all expired or unused medications.

Medicine that is safe for you to take may not be safe and potentially harmful for others. The best way to discard all expired or unused medications is through drug take back days within your community. During medication take back events, a temporary collection site is set up within the community for safe disposal of unused medications, including prescription and over-the-counter ones. On at National Medication Take Back Day held last October, over 745,000 pounds of unneeded medications were collected from medicine cabinets across the country, creating a safer home environment for many families. You can also check with your local pharmacist as some pharmacies offer on-site drop off boxes, mail back programs, or other ways for you to dispose of your medications.

Safe Kids Grand Forks, in partnership with the Grand Forks Sheriff's Department, the City of Grand Forks, and Altru Health System will be hosting a community Medication Take Back Event on March 22, 2022 from 8:00 am-12:30 pm in Hugo's Parking Lot, 1375 S. Columbia Rd. You can bring outdated or unused medications (over-the-counter or prescription) for proper disposal. Medications can include pills, patches, capsules, liquids, creams, ointments or other types of medications. For more information, contact Safe Kids Grand Forks at 701.780.1489 or safekids@altru.org.

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