



WOMEN'S HEART FOUNDATION

Medication Safety Week is April 1-7

Cleaning Out Your Medicine Cabinet



Reviewed by Sarjita Naik, Pharm.D., Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital;
Bonnie Arkus, RN; Danielle Cairns, RN; Mary Ann Cavallaro, RN, MBA

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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, gauze, 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

Medication Safety Week April 1-7

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

Take Care of Your Heart



www.WomensHeart.org

Wellness Communities – Prevention – Gender care

The Women's Heart Foundation

a foundation of wellness and prevention

The Women's Heart Foundation, the only non-governmental organization that implements demonstration projects for heart disease prevention, is a 501c3 charity that supports gender-care and evidence-based medicine to improve survival and quality of life.

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