

Medication Safety

Each year in the U.S., more than 700,000 people are seen in a hospital emergency department (ED) for adverse drug events. This includes:

- Over 177,000 adults age 65 years or older.
- About 71,000 children (18 years old or younger) due to accidental medicine poisonings. Over 80% of these visits occurred because an unsupervised child found and consumed a medicine.

Many adverse drug problems can be prevented.



CHILDREN

Do This



Buy household products, vitamins, and medicines in child-resistant packaging. But you still need to keep them out of children's reach at all times. Teach children not to take medicines and vitamins unless given by an adult.

Not That



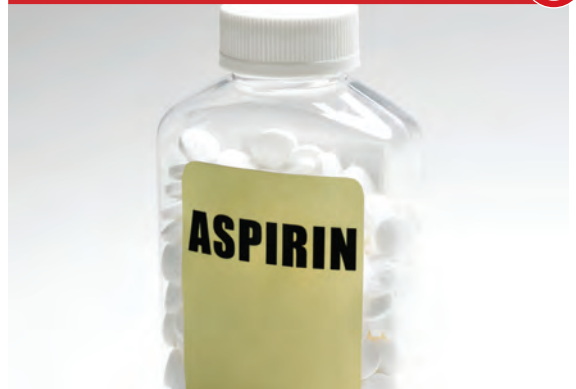
Never leave vitamins and medicines on tables, counters, and dressers. Never refer to these as "candy." Vitamins and minerals with iron can be deadly to children. Do not keep medicines in purses or anywhere children can get them.

Do This



Make sure to give the right type and dose of medicine, such as acetaminophen to children. Use a calibrated medicine dropper or spoon, as directed.

Not That



Do not give aspirin or other medicines with salicylates, such as Pepto Bismol to children under 19 years old due to its link to Reye's syndrome, a condition that can cause death.

ADULTS

Do This



Use the same local and mail order pharmacies for all prescribed medicines. The pharmacist can check for harmful interactions.

Not That



Don't buy medicines at multiple pharmacies without giving a list of all medicines you take to each pharmacist. Don't buy or take an over-the-counter (OTC) medicine if the package is opened or has been tampered with.

Do This



Follow warnings on prescribed and OTC medicine containers.

Not That



Do not take a medicine if you do not understand the instructions or if it looks different than the same medicine you have been taking without consulting your doctor or pharmacist.

Do This

**DROWSINESS
DRY MOUTH
ACHES & PAINS
RESTLESSNESS
NAUSEA
DIZZINESS
CHILLS
FATIGUE**

When medicine is prescribed, ask if it is safe to take with your other medicines. Ask which side effects you should contact your doctor about. State allergies you have to medicines and foods, such as shrimp.

Not That



Do not self-diagnose and treat health problems with OTC or herbal supplements on your own. Ask your doctor or pharmacist first.

Do This



To make sure you take the right medicine and dose, read the label before taking it. Read in a well-lit area. Wear your glasses or use a magnifying glass, if needed, to read the small print.

Not That



Do not exceed the prescribed dose unless advised by your doctor. Do not take medicines in the dark. Do not take a medicine if it has an ingredient you are allergic to.

Do This



Find out from your doctor, pharmacist, or the medicine's warning label if you should avoid anything, such as certain foods or being in the sun while taking a medicine.

Not That



Do not give or sell your prescribed medicines to anyone.

ADULTS

Do This



Keep track of how much medicine you have, when to order refills, and when to get new prescriptions. Do this so you do not run out of your medicines. If you can, enroll in auto refills for the medicines you take on a regular basis.

Not That



Do not stop taking a prescribed medicine because you ran out. Get more. Do not stop taking medicines, such as ones for high blood pressure because your blood pressure readings are in the normal range or you feel good. This means the medicines are working.

Do This



Ask your doctor if and how much alcohol you can safely have with medicines you take. Use strong pain relievers, sleeping pills, and other sedatives as advised by your doctor. Use caution when taking these medicines.

Not That



Do not mix alcohol and sedatives. Do not take someone else's sleeping pills, prescribed pain medicines, or other medicines, especially ones that treat depression, anxiety, seizures, and similar problems.

Do This

Review your medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements with your doctor or pharmacist at least once a year. Find out which over-the-counter pain medicines are okay for you to take.



Not That



Do not take an over-the-counter pain reliever while taking prescribed pain relievers. Consult your doctor.



Do This



Follow your doctor's advice for blood testing to monitor safe usage of certain medicines, such as blood thinners and medicines that prevent and treat diabetes, heart, problems, and seizures.

Not That



If you skip a dose of a medicine, do not take the skipped dose with the next dose. This could be too much medicine at one time. Consult your doctor or pharmacist or read package insert guidelines for what to do when you skip a dose.

Do This

Safely discard medicines that have expired or that you no longer use. Mix pills with used coffee grounds or kitty litter and put this in the garbage in a sealed bag or plastic container. Find out about safe medicine disposal from www.fda.gov and www.epa.gov. Search for "safe medicine disposal."



Not That



Do not throw medicines down the drain or flush them down the toilet, unless directed on the label.

