6 things to know before taking any medicines

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that adverse drug events (ADEs) are a serious public health problem. An ADE is when an injury occurs after taking medicine. With 82 percent of Americans taking at least one medication, ADEs could happen to almost anyone.

ADEs can be serious, and even deadly. They may include:

- Side effects from a medicine
- Interactions with other medicines or supplements
- Allergic reactions to a medicine
- Overdoses
- Taking the wrong dose or type of medicine

You can avoid ADEs with a few simple steps. Do these things today to keep yourself and loved ones safe:

1. *Be aware of any interactions before you take a medicine.* Some medicines should not be taken with certain foods, such as grapefruit or grapefruit juice. Others can cause side effects if taken with certain herbs and supplements. Because of possible interactions, be sure your doctor knows everything you take, including natural supplements, vitamins and herbs. If you're caring for an aging family member, keep track of all their medications and show the list to their doctors during appointments. If you see more than one doctor, make sure all your doctors know which medications you take.

2. *Keep them secure, out of reach from others.* Something that's safe for you to take could be dangerous — or even deadly — to a child or pet. Keep all medicines out of reach of kids and pets, preferably with child-proof packaging.

3. *Take only the dose you are prescribed.* If you feel your medication isn't working, talk to your doctor about options. Taking a higher dose than what's prescribed or mixing it with other medications can lead to serious side effects or overdoses.

4. *Don't share your medicines.* It can be dangerous to give someone a prescription drug that wasn't prescribed to them. Even over-the-counter medicines should be used with caution, especially if a person has health conditions or is taking other medicines.

5. *Keep medicines in their original bottles.* Putting medicines in other containers could lead to someone accidentally taking the wrong medicine. It also makes it more difficult to keep track of what you're taking.

6. *Dispose of expired or unneeded medicines correctly.* Using a drug "take-back" program is a safe option. If you must throw them away, don't flush them. Put them in the household trash with kitty litter or coffee grounds. For complete information on medicine disposal, visit the FDA website at www.fda.gov.