

Perplexed About Rx?

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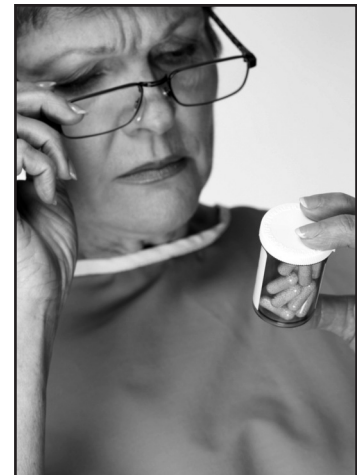
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Medications are a part of our everyday lives. The average West Virginian has 17 prescriptions filled each year, the highest rate in the nation. Those over age 65 fill an average of 38 prescriptions a year. That is \$1.7 billion spent on prescriptions (Rx) at retail pharmacies.

Consumers need to be fully informed and extremely careful with prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications because mistakes do happen. Approximately 1.5 million Americans get sick, injured, or die from errors in prescribing, dispensing, or taking medicines. Of the 31 billion prescriptions filled in the United States each year, an estimated 5 percent are not filled correctly.

Misuse and abuse of prescriptions and OTCs is on the rise. Theft of prescription drugs has also become more common. While OTCs are not dangerous when taken according to label directions, they can cause serious health problems or death when taken incorrectly or along with other medicines, supplements, foods, or drinks that cause interactions.

How can you protect yourself and your family? Use the checklist on the back to learn ways to improve your medication safety.



Perplexed About Rx? Use Reliable Information Sources

Be sure your information is based on facts from these sources:

1. Your healthcare providers and pharmacist
2. Your WVU Extension Service county office, health department, department of health and human resources, or senior center
3. Web sites sponsored by the U.S. government or professional organizations

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Check the safety tips in the appropriate box.

At my healthcare provider's office, do I . . .	Already do this?	Need to do this?
Bring a current list of all prescriptions, OTCs, vitamins, and herbal supplements? Review the list twice a year?		
Have the drug name, dosage, directions, and purpose clearly written before I leave the office?		
Ask these questions about meds:		
What is the drug's name? What is it supposed to do?		
Is this the right medicine for my condition, age, and gender?		
Could other proven, generic or low-cost drugs be prescribed?		
What are the side effects?		
Will it work safely with the other medications I take?		
When will I stop taking it?		
Exactly when and how often should I take it? Should I avoid certain foods, drinks, dietary supplements, or driving when taking this?		
Besides this drug, are there alternative treatments that may help my condition?		
How do I dispose of any unused medication?		
At my pharmacy, do I . . .	Always do this?	Need to do this?
Talk to the pharmacist about new and existing prescriptions?		
Give the pharmacist a copy of my medication list to review for interactions, side effects, or recalls?		
Tell the pharmacist about my allergies or health problems?		
Ask for large-print labels, patient information, and child-proof containers, if needed?		
Speak up if something is wrong (drug name, dosage, or looks)?		
Ask about the safety of taking OTC meds along with my prescriptions?		

At home, do I . . .	Always do this?	Need to do this?
Read the prescription information and call my healthcare provider or pharmacist if I don't understand it?		
Make sure I check the label each time before taking my medicine so that I take the right one at the right time?		
Keep a record of the time and the dose of my medicines I take each day?		
Keep my medicines in their original containers?		
Never take any medications that were prescribed for someone else or have expired?		
Call my provider or pharmacist before taking any new OTC, vitamin, or herbal supplement?		
Keep a current list of medications: in my wallet or purse, with close family members, and with all my providers?		
Mark refill dates on the calendar so I'll know I am taking my medicines regularly?		

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