

Prescription Drug Toolkit



The purpose of this toolkit is to help patients develop a better understanding about how to safely use their prescription medications.

The information in this toolkit is brought to you by:



MORGAN COUNTY
PARTNERSHIP

This project is partially funded by **Eastridge Health Systems** and the **Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation**.

Medical Disclaimer: The Prescription Drug Toolkit in no way seeks to diagnose or treat illness or to serve as a substitute for professional medical care.

Information sources provided in this Toolkit: lsmf.org, safemedication.com, learnaboutrxsafety.org

The numbers.....

- Almost 15% of the patients did not know their doctor had prescribed a new medicine for them to take after discharge.
- One-third of the patients could not name their new medicine.
- More than one-third of the patients did not know important information about the new medicine, including the dose, how often to take it, and why they had to take it.
- Only 22% of the patients could name a bad side effect of the new medicine, and even less recalled being told about side effects before leaving the hospital.
- Almost 1 out of 3 patients did not know whom to call if they had a question about their new medicine.
- Older patients knew less about their new medicine than younger patients. More educated patients knew just as little about their new medicines as less educated patients, and better reading skills did not ensure understanding of medicine directions.

These findings suggest that doctors, nurses, and pharmacists are not providing enough education about medicines in understandable terms and under conditions that promote learning.



Taking any type of medicine involves some risk, Be Aware of them.



Risks of medicine use results from:

- A harmful interaction between the medicine and a food, drink, supplement or another medicine
- The possibility that the medicine may cause side effects

Even when used correctly, medicines may cause problems. This may occur because of an allergic reaction, such as hives, itching or difficulty breathing, or it may cause a side effect, such as headache, dizziness, or an upset stomach. Being a responsible patient means that you read the Drug Facts label that accompanies the over-the-counter or prescription medication and discuss any questions you may have with doctor or pharmacist.

The 5 Rights:

Medications can be very beneficial when taken as directed. However, it is **VERY IMPORTANT** to double check the following prior to taking your medication. Be sure you have:

- The **right** medicine
- The **right** person
- The **right** amount
- The **right** time
- The **right** way (swallow, chew, apply to skin, etc.)

Steer Clear of Medication Misuse

Misuse of medicines can result in serious and even deadly consequences.

Whether it's for your family unit or as a caregiver for aging parents or other loved ones, know your medicines and how to best promote their safe use. Potential problems that you or a family member might encounter may include:

- **Over use**- taking more than prescribed or recommended by your health care provider or label.
- **Under use**- taking less than prescribed or recommended, missing or skipping doses, not filling prescriptions or failing to get a refill.
- **Not following the instructions**
- **Taking medicines that are not prescribed for you**
- **Drug interactions** occur when a drug interacts with another medicine, herbals, alcohol, or even foods, and changes the way the drug acts in the body. The risk of serious interactions is higher for those taking multiple medications.

Examples of drug interactions include:

- ◇ Alcohol consumed with sleep medicines (ex. Ambien) and anti-psychotics (ex. Seroquel)
- ◇ Antibiotics may decrease the effectiveness of birth control pills
- ◇ Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitor (SSRI) Antidepressants (ex. Zoloft) taken with St. Johns Wort increases the risk of drowsiness and not being able to think clearly.
- ◇ Grapefruit juice can prevent the body from breaking down some medicines, which means the medicine may stay in your system longer.

Unfortunately, not using medicines properly can spell trouble for you and your family, such as:

- Preventing your loved ones from getting well as fast as you'd like, leading to longer sickness, or unnecessary progression of disease
- Reducing the body's ability to respond to certain therapies
- Decreasing your quality of life

Read the Labels on Your Medicine Container

Drug Facts

Active ingredient (in each tablet)	Purpose
Chlorpheniramine maleate 2 mg	Antihistamine

Uses temporarily relieves these symptoms due to hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies:
 ■ sneezing ■ runny nose ■ Itchy, watery eyes ■ Itchy throat

Warnings
 Ask a doctor before use if you have
 ■ glaucoma ■ a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis
 ■ trouble urinating due to an enlarged prostate gland

Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are taking tranquilizers or sedatives

When using this product
 ■ You may get drowsy ■ avoid alcoholic drinks
 ■ alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness
 ■ be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery
 ■ excitability may occur, especially in children

If pregnant or breast-feeding, ask a health professional before use.
 Keep out of reach of children. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.

Directions

adults and children 12 years and over	take 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 12 tablets in 24 hours
children 6 years to under 12 years	take 1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 6 tablets in 24 hours
children under 6 years	ask a doctor

Other information store at 20-25° C (68-77° F) ■ protect from excessive moisture

Inactive ingredients D&C yellow no. 10, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, pregelatinized starch

The product's active ingredients, including the amount in each dosage unit

The purpose of the product.

The uses (indications) for the product.

Specific warnings, including when the product should not be used under any circumstances, and when it is appropriate to consult with a doctor or pharmacist. This section also describes side effects that could occur and substances or activities to avoid.

Dosage instructions--when, how, and how often to take the product.

The product's inactive ingredients, important information to help consumers avoid ingredients that may cause an allergic reaction.

Best Home Safeguarding Practices: Secure, Monitor, and Dispose

Secure.

Whenever there are medicines in the home, they need to be kept out of the sight and reach of children. Whether it is a small child or an older teen, over-the-counter and prescription medications need to be stored in a secure location, such as a locked cabinet or storage bin, especially if the prescription is a controlled substance (e.g. morphine, Percocet, oxycodone, OxyContin, Vicodin, Norco, hydrocodone, Xanax, Valium, Ativan, etc). The usual places for storing prescription medications, such as the night stand, kitchen cabinet, or bathroom, may not be the safest place to store your medicines. You may want to consider placing them in a less visible and more secure location.

Guidelines for storing your medicines and vitamins include;

- ⇒ Storing them in a cool, dry place away from bright windows or rooms that are affected by outdoor weather. Many people store their medicines in the bathroom. However, the heat and moisture/humidity from the showers and baths can cause the medicine to break down, which can decrease the effectiveness.
- ⇒ Keeping them in their original containers. If you get refills on certain medicines, don't be tempted to combine them with the old pills because you won't be able to tell the difference or know the expiration date. Also, some medicines are made by a variety of manufactures. Therefore, the exact same drug may be shaped differently (color, size or shape of tablet) depending on the manufacturer. Ask your pharmacist if you have any questions.
- ⇒ Making sure that your medicines are always stored away from other dangerous substances that could be taken by mistake.



Best Home Safeguarding Practices: Secure, Monitor and Dispose

Monitor.

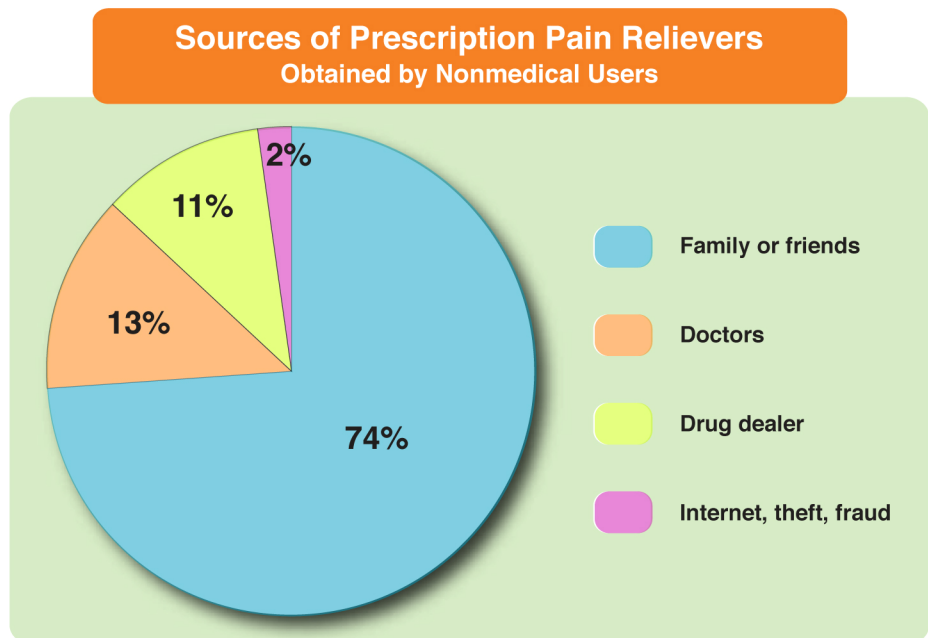
Patients and consumers need to be aware of how much over-the-counter and prescription medications they have on hand in their homes. It is beneficial to know when your home medicines are going to expire and/or when you may be due for a refill.

Also, if you take a pill regularly and notice that you have to get your prescription filled more frequently than normal, then there may be a cause for concern. It could be that you are

not taking your medicine properly and you may want to consult your doctor or pharmacist. It could also mean that someone is stealing your pills from you.

The latter is more likely to occur when there are pills in the home that have a history of being abused or sold on the street, such as OxyContin,

Hydrocodone, and Percocet. If you feel that your medicines have been stolen, you should call the police to report the incident. If you do not report the theft, it may cause a delay in getting a new prescription from your physician.



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health www.oas.samhsa.gov.

Best Home Safeguarding Practices: Secure, Monitor and Dispose

Dispose.

Consumers were once advised to flush their expired or unused medicines; however, recent environmental impact studies report that this could be having an adverse effect on the environment. Just three small steps can have a huge impact:

- **DO NOT FLUSH unused or expired medications or POUR them down the sink or drain.** Although this is the best practice, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has determined that certain medications could be flushed to avoid potential abuse. It is important to read the instructions on your medications and talk with your pharmacist.
- **Instead, dispose unused medications in household trash.** When throwing these medicines away, it is important to ensure the safety of children and pets from potentially negative effects by:
 - ⇒ Pouring medicines in a sealable plastic bag. If medicines are in a solid form (pill, liquid, capsule, etc.) add water to dissolve it.
 - ⇒ Add kitty litter, coffee grounds, or any material that mixes with the medicines and makes it less appealing to pets or children to eat, to the plastic bag.
 - ⇒ Seal the plastic bag and put it in trash. For an additional safeguard, you can also put the plastic bag inside an old coffee tin or other container prior to placing in the trash.
 - ⇒ It is also important to remove and destroy **ALL** identifying personal information on the prescription label from the medication bottle.



Check for approved state and local collection programs. Many communities have a Prescription Drug Return Program where residents can drop off their unused and/or expired medications so that they can be safely and properly disposed.

(See page 13 for local drop off centers.)

Best Practices for Reducing Risk of Side Effects & Unintended Drug Interactions

1. Carefully read the prescription drug medicine information sheet that comes with your prescription (s) and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs facts label.
2. Double check each time you take a dose of your medicine. Check to make sure that you are taking the right medicine, for the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, and in the right way (swallow, chew, apply to skin, etc.). Also pay attention to what different medicines look like and how to store them properly.
3. Take medicines EXACTLY as directed by your doctor. This means following dosage recommendations and knowing how to measure your medicines correctly to get the right dose. Always use the measuring spoon, cup or syringe that comes with the medicine. If you have children, always give the medicines based on their weight and age. If a dosage is not listed for your child's weight and age, talk to your pharmacist or doctor.
4. Keep all medicines in their original container.
5. Talk with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any questions or concerns about your medications. Also consult him or her before starting any new prescription or non-prescription medicines.
6. Create a list of all your medicines and allergies -be sure to list all OTCs, prescription medications, vitamins, herbals, and other supplements. Be sure to record information about why each medicine is being taken, dosage and when they are taken and note any side effects or allergies. It is also important to note if you or another family member smokes or drinks alcohol. Be sure to share this list with your family's health care providers
7. Use the same pharmacy for all of your family's prescriptions to avoid confusion. It's safer to have family records in one place.
8. Talk with your family about why it's important not to share prescription medicines or give extra supply to friends or others. (See the brochure on Talking to Your Kids About Prescription Drug Abuse)
9. Keep a list of emergency numbers handy, including the toll-free national poison center (1-800-222-1222), in the event of an accidental overdose or poisoning.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor or Pharmacist:



1. What are the brand and generic names of my medicines?
2. What does my medicine look like?
3. What am I taking my medicine for?
4. How much of my medicine should I take, and how often should I take it (daily, twice a day, three times a day, etc.)?
5. What time of the day should I take this medicine (morning, noon, evening, bedtime)?
6. Should I take my medicine with meals or on an empty stomach?
7. Do I need to avoid dairy products or fruit juices while taking this medicine?
8. How long will I need to take this medicine?
9. If I start to feel better can I stop or take less of the medication?
10. What are the side effects of this medicine, and what should I do if they happen?
11. What should I do if I miss a dose?
12. Does this medicine interact with my other medicines (herbals, vitamins, etc.) or with food?
13. Does this medicine replace anything else I am taking?
14. Where and how do I store my medicine?
15. What should I do with any leftover medicine?

TIP: Take these questions to your doctor and/or pharmacist. Write the answers down on a piece of paper and make sure you understand all of the answers. Do not be afraid to ask them to repeat any information that you do not fully understand.

Request a Brown Bag Check-Up

The “Brown Bag Check-Up” could be one of the single best things that you can do to avoid medication mistakes and cut down on unnecessary medications.

A brown-bag check-up is when you gather all of your current medications and over-the-counter products into a “brown-bag” and show them to your doctor or pharmacist so he/she can look for any potential problems.



Schedule your brown-bag appointment in advance so the doctor or pharmacist has allotted enough time for the visit. Remember to take any prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, topical treatments, herbal products, or “natural products” you are using.

During the “check-up”, the doctor or pharmacist will review all of the medications and products you are currently taking, to see if they are the same as those listed on your medical record or pharmacy profile. They can double check these medications for the correct dosage strength, frequency, or identify if you are using outdated or discontinued medications. These practitioners can also screen the medications and products for potential duplication of therapy or side effects. This is why it is important to include non-prescription products in the bag.

Make the Brown Bag Check-Up an annual - or more frequent - habit. It is important that you and your healthcare professionals are informed about all medical products you take.

Traveling Safely with Medicines

- **Many medications can cause "photosensitivity," or increased sensitivity to sunlight.** Even if you don't usually sunburn, taking medications that cause this reaction could greatly increase your chances of getting a bad burn. Your pharmacist can advise you about whether your medication can cause photosensitivity and recommend the right SPF (skin protection factor) for your skin type.
- **If you are flying, keep your medications in your carry-on luggage so that you have access to them during your flight and will not lose them in the event that your luggage gets lost.** Plus, keeping your medications with you helps prevent exposure to extreme temperatures in the baggage compartment, which can alter the drug's effectiveness. Keep in mind that airport security requires that your medications be transported in their original, labeled containers.
- **If your medication requires you to use a syringe - insulin, for instance - you may need to carry your prescription with you to ensure that you can pass through airport security.** The American Diabetes Association recommends that people with diabetes be prepared to provide airport security personnel with copies of prescriptions for diabetes medications and supplies as well as complete contact information for the prescriber.
- **Make sure that you carry your prescriber's and your pharmacy's phone numbers with you when you are away from home.** In case you lose your medications, you may need a new prescription. You should also keep on hand a list of all your prescriptions.
- **If you are traveling through several time zones, consult with your physician or pharmacist to work out a specific plan for adjusting the timing and dosage of your medications.** This will prevent you from taking too much or too little.
- **If you are visiting a foreign country, beware of buying "over-the-counter" medications.** Many medicines that are available by prescription in the United States are available "over the counter" in other countries. Some of these medications could have different ingredients, and may not undergo comparable quality control. Buying these medications could put you at risk for allergic reactions, drug interactions, or other problems.
- **If you are visiting a hot, humid climate, be sure to keep your medications in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight.** Never store medications in the glove compartment of your car. Also, because of the heat and humidity that build up in a bathroom, it is the worst place to store medication whether you are at home or on the road.
- **Take along more medication than the number of days you've planned to be away.** This will allow you to be prepared for unexpected delays.
- **In this era of prescription drug abuse, it is important to be able to prove that the medicines in your possession are yours and were prescribed to you for legitimate medical reasons when traveling.** In fact, it is ILLEGAL to travel with loose pills outside of their prescription bottle without a prescription. Therefore, in order to avoid any kind of misunderstanding with law enforcement, always travel with your prescriptions in their original containers.

Consumer Drug Return Program

Below is a list of sites that are participating in the Potomac Water Watch Consumer Drug Return Program. This means that during regular business hours, consumers are able to return all unused, unwanted, and expired prescription and over-the-counter medicines. However, these establishments do not take *controlled substances, such as Hydrocodone and Methadone. Please call the participating business for more information.

Participating Sites:

Morgan County Health Department

187 South Green Street, Suite 2
Berkeley Springs, WV
Phone: (304) 258-1513

CVS Pharmacy

1200 Edwin Miller Blvd.
Martinsburg WV
Phone: (304) 263-4951

CVS Pharmacy

46 Middleway Pike
Inwood, WV
Phone: (304) 229-4318

Reeds Pharmacy

Route 50 East
Romney, WV
Phone: (304) 822-1000



For more information go to:

Potomac Water Watch at www.potomacwaterwatch.org
or contact West Virginia Rivers Coalition
304/637-7201 www.wvrivers.org

*For more information on disposing controlled substances, contact the **Morgan County Sheriff's Department** at (304) 258-1067.

Additional Resources

Community Resources:

Hospice of the Eastern Panhandle	304-264-0406
Morgan County Health Department	304-258-1513
Morgan County Partnership	304-258-7807
Morgan County Sheriff's Department	304-258-1067
War Memorial Hospital	304-258-1234
Eastridge Health Systems	304-258-2889

Local Physicians:

Community Physicians	304-258-0506
Family Medicine– Dr. Berens	304-258-4408
Graves Medical Practice	304-258-6327
Internal Medicine– Dr. Hashem	304-258-9433
Pediatric & Family Medicine: Dr. Paul & Pam Quarantillo	304-258-8805

Local Pharmacists:

Reed's Pharmacy:	304-258-3800
Rite Aide Pharmacy:	304-258-4955

Help Lines:

Poison Help Line:	800-222-1222
WV Quit Line:	1-866-WV-QUIT

Internet Resources:

drugalert.org	Safemedication.com
glutenfreedrugs.com	Smartdisposal.net
ismp.org	Talkaboutrx.org
learnaboutrxsafety.org	wvrxabuse.org
Parentstheantidrug.org	