

JUNE

This month, *Health is Primary* is focusing on safe use of prescription medicines. We are sharing the facts about the risks of medicine misuse and the importance of using medicines as prescribed – along with safe use and disposal tips for patients. **Join us and spread the word.**

#MakeHealthPrimary

BE A CHAMPION



- **Distribute** patient information materials (tear sheets) on safe prescription medicine use (source: FamilyDoctor.org) in your primary care practice.
- **Share** the facts about risks of prescription medicine misuse and tips through social media. Post regularly on Twitter and Facebook using the facts listed here.
- **Don't forget** to follow the campaign (Facebook and Twitter: @HealthisPrimary). Retweet and share our posts!
- **Share** your stories about how primary care is helping educate patients in your practice, community or state. Go to www.healthisprimary.org and click on the "stories" tab.

THE FACTS ABOUT PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE MISUSE

- Although most people take prescription medications responsibly, an estimated 54 million people (more than 20 percent of those aged 12 and older) have used such medications for nonmedical reasons at least once in their lifetime. (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- According to results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an estimated 2.1 million Americans used prescription drugs nonmedically for the first time within the past year, which averages to approximately 5,750 initiates per day. (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- Although misuse of prescription drugs affects many Americans, certain populations such as youth, older adults, and women may be at particular risk. (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- Nonmedical use of prescription drugs is highest among young adults aged 18 to 25, with 4.4 percent reporting nonmedical use in the past month. (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- More than 80 percent of older patients (aged 57 to 85 years) use at least one prescription medication on a daily basis, with more than 50 percent taking more than five medications or supplements daily. This can potentially lead to health issues resulting from unintentionally using a prescription medication in a manner other than how it was prescribed, or from intentional nonmedical use. (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

SEE THE FOREST AND THE TREES



JUNE FOCUS: PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES

06 | 2018

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
05 2018 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	07 2018 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	29	30	31	1	2
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
FATHER'S DAY						
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

A PRESCRIPTION FOR SAFE DRUG USE

WHAT IS PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE MISUSE?

Medicines can help you feel better. But if taken the wrong way, they can actually make you feel worse. The misuse of prescription drugs can include behaviors such as taking a medicine in a manner or dose other than prescribed by a licensed physician, taking someone else's prescription, even if for a legitimate medical complaint such as pain, or taking a medication to feel euphoria. The most commonly misused medicines are:

- **Opioids:** typically prescribed to treat pain
- **Depressants:** used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders
- **Stimulants:** commonly prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

WHO IS AT RISK?

Most people take prescription medicines responsibly. However, an estimated 54 million people have used medications for nonmedical reasons at least once in their lifetime. Youth, older adults, and women are at particular risk of misusing prescription drugs. In fact, nonmedical use of prescription drugs is highest among young adults aged 18 to 25. Additionally, the majority of older adults use at least one prescription medicine on a daily basis and more than half take more than five medicines per day. Managing the safe use of this many medicines can be difficult for some, and can potentially lead to health issues resulting from mistakenly using a medicine in a manner other than how it was prescribed.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK MY DOCTOR ABOUT MY MEDICINES?

When starting a new medication, ask your doctor the following questions to ensure you know how to use the medicine correctly and safely:

- What does the medicine do?
- When and how should I take the medicine?
- What side effects (reactions your body may have to the medicine) could I have?
- Will the medicine react to any other medicines, food, or drinks?
- Should I avoid any activities while I'm taking the medicine?
- What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?
- How will I know whether the medicine is working?

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT EACH MEDICINE YOU TAKE:

- Name (generic name and brand name)
- Reason for taking it
- How much to take and how often to take it
- Possible side effects and what to do if you have them
- How long to continue taking it
- Special instructions (taking it at bedtime, with meals, on an empty stomach, etc.)

STEPS TO KEEP PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES AWAY FROM CHILDREN:

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention, 60,000 children are hospitalized each year from accidentally consuming over-the-counter or prescription drugs. **Follow these steps to keep prescriptions medicines out of reach:**

- 1. Safely store medicine.** Store all of your medicines, vitamins, and prescription drugs in out-of-reach areas, such as high-up or locked cabinets, with bottle caps closed securely.
- 2. Safely give medicine.** Read drug ingredients, amounts, facts, and effects before using any medicine and use a constant, reliable measuring method.
- 3. Safely educate about medicine.** Explain to children that only adults can give medicine and that they should never take medicine they find or try to get it on their own. Be direct in telling them why they are taking medicine. Do not confuse children by calling it candy or treats.
- 4. Safely dispose of medicine.** Dispose of medicines as soon as they expire, are no longer needed, or unused. Be sure to follow disposal instructions listed on the container and check the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's guidelines for each drug's proper disposal instructions.

TIPS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR MEDICINES:

Tracking your medicines, administering them, and making sure you don't run out can be overwhelming. **There are a few tools out there that can help ensure you're taking prescription medicines properly:**

- **Color code your medicine bottles.** Mark all the medicines you take in the morning in **red**, mark medicines you take at lunch in **green**, mark dinnertime meds in **blue** and those you take at bedtime in **orange**.
- **Buy a pill organizer.** Pill organizers are easy and efficient ways to organize your medicines.
- **Try an automatic pill dispenser.** These battery-operated devices automatically dispense pills up to four times per day. They also have a light and alarm to remind you when it is time to take your medicine.
- **Create a medicine record.** A chart can be a useful way to organize important information about your medicines in one place, include name, dose, time of day taken, and any side effects. When you go to the doctor, you'll have a record of what you've taken and if there were any side effects or concerns.
- **Use technology.** If you're comfortable with technology, you can try an app to help manage your medicines. There are several free apps that can also provide important information about a medicine you're taking. Most apps can help you build a schedule and remind you when it's time to take your medicine.

OPIOID USE, STORAGE, AND DISPOSAL DO'S AND DON'TS:

The safe use, storage, and disposal of opioid medicines is extremely important because these medicines are highly addictive and easily misused.

DO'S	DONT'S
Take your medicine exactly as prescribed.	Don't give your opioid medicines to anyone else.
Use pain patches only as directed.	Don't take opioids unless they are prescribed for you.
Watch for signs of overmedication (e.g., slurred speech, confusion, excessive drowsiness, and difficulty waking from sleep).	Don't change your dosage or stop taking opioids without talking to your doctor first.
Store your medicine in its original packaging, in a safe place where others can't easily access it.	Don't cut, chew, crush, or dissolve opioid tablets or capsules. If you can't swallow your medicine whole, talk to your doctor.
Properly dispose of unused opioids.	Don't use pain patches when taking other long-acting opioid drugs.
	Don't combine opioid drugs with alcohol or street drugs.
	Don't drive a car or use heavy machinery until you have become used to your medicine's effects.

REFERENCES:

All information sourced from [FamilyDoctor.org](https://www.familydoctor.org), a resource operated by the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Misuse of Prescription Drugs Research Report Series.

SEE THE FOREST AND THE TREES



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