

VOLUME 1

## OBSERVE POISON PREVENTION MONTH BY CONDUCTING A MEDICINE CABINET CHECK UP

### Dade County Injury Prevention Coalition Mission Statement:

To heighten injury awareness, provide trauma prevention education, initiate injury prevention research and promote wellness and safety to all populations in our community.

Coalition partners include health care professionals, law enforcement, fire rescue departments, public health and allied health professionals, local and state government representatives, business representatives, community organizations and activists.

We Provide prevention and education on bicycle, pedestrian, seat belt, car seat, fire, gun, poison, water, teen risky behavior, drinking & driving, and sport safety.

For additional information:

Cindy Magnole, RN

Chair, Dade County Injury  
Prevention Coalition

Emergency Care Center

Jackson Memorial Hospital

16 11 NW 12 Ave

Miami, FL 33136

3055-585-5000X4

cmagnole@jhs-miami.org

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

-Henry de Bracton, *De Legibus*, 1240



When was the last time you cleaned out your medicine cabinet?

According to a 2005 Harris Interactive Research Study, 66% of adults clean out their refrigerators regularly however only 31% of adults clean out their medicine cabinet annually.

While having medicine available is important, making sure it isn't out of date is even more important.

First, the bathroom and kitchen are not good places to store medicine. The bathroom is moist and humid and the heat in the kitchen may be detrimental to the medicine themselves. Ideally, medicines should be stored in a cool, dry, dark place such as in a locked box on a top shelf in a linen closet.



### This Check Up allows you to:

- Ensure you have the right medication on hand
- Make sure all medicine is in its original, labeled child proof container
- Check for outdated, discolored or unfinished medicine. These should be discarded immediately, check with your local pharmacist on proper disposal of these medications
- Clean and organize the shelves or better yet get a much safer lock box
- Restock with basic first aid items
- Double check for proper storage

### What should you have in your medicine box?

Band-Aids \* Gauze \* Tape \* Hydrogen peroxide \* Antibiotic ointment \* Antacid for upset stomach \* Antihistamine \* Age appropriate pain reliever/fever reducer such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen \* Tweezers \* Scissors \* Thermometer \* Adult Cold medicine/decongestant \* Elastic bandage for sprains/strains \* First aid information \* Emergency phone numbers \* A list of medications and allergies for each family member

The Poison Center provides a free 24/7 service for callers with poison emergencies or questions about poison prevention.

### What You Don't Know About Your Medicines *Can Hurt You*

- Over 70 percent of all poison fatalities occur in adults ages 20 to 59. (AAPCC,2005)
- While adults 60 and over account for just over 5 percent of poison exposures, they account for 16.3 percent of the fatalities. (AAPCC,2005)
- The top four substances involved in human poisonings are pain medicines, cosmetics and personal care products, cleaning substances, and sedatives/hypnotics/antipsychotic medications. (AAPCC, 2006)\*

When most people think of poisonings, they are likely to think of small children. It is true that most of the calls to Poison Control Center involve children under 6. Fortunately, most of these poisonings turn out to be minor and do not require emergency care. But, as the statistics show above, adults are not as likely to have a harmless exposure, especially if they have mixed medications with alcohol or other medicines against the advice of their doctors. As the recent tragedy of actor Heath Ledger's death shows, just because drugs are not illegal, does not mean they can't be deadly if combined improperly.

### The Poison Control Center offers these tips for avoiding accidental poisoning.

- ✓ Do not leave medications within reach of children
- ✓ Inform your doctor of all the medications you are taking, even herbal or over the counter products.
- ✓ If you take multiple medications from several doctors, keep an updated list of your meds handy for office visits or emergencies. Be sure to list the name of the drug, not just its purpose (i.e. blood pressure medicine), the dosage and how often you take it.
- ✓ Double check for the **Right** medicine and the **Right** dose
- ✓ Use a proper dosing cup or tool for proper measurements
- ✓ Kitchen utensils should not be used as a measurement tool. Do not confuse a teaspoon with a tablespoon—a tablespoon is three times larger than a teaspoon
- ✓ Never take or administer medication in the dark
- ✓ Safely discard old, expired or unused medications (see box). Do not keep them around "just in case." Expired medicine loses effectiveness.
- ✓ Never use medication prescribed to someone else or offer your medication to someone else.
- ✓ Call the Poison Control Hotline 1-800-222-1222 for any suspected medication error or dosing mistake. Our poison information specialists can tell you what to expect and whether you need to seek medical care. We can also answer questions about herbal product safety and over the counter medications.



### What Can I Do With Old And Unused Medicine?

Flushing medicine down the sink or toilet may be bad for the environment. Throwing it away with the trash may cause less pollution, but there is a risk that other people or animals may get hold of it. Privacy may also be a concern if containers have labels with names and other personal information.

*The following steps can be taken to more safely get rid of unused and expired medication:*

- Keep medications in the containers they came in with child-resistant lids firmly in place.
- Remove labels before discarding the medication or use a permanent marker to cover any personal information on labels.
- If throwing away liquids, place the liquids in a plastic bag that can be sealed in case of leaks. Wrap glass bottles to prevent breakage.
- Mix medications with things like cat litter or coffee grounds so people will be less likely to take them.
- Add a small amount of water to pills or capsules to at least partly dissolve them.
- Put the medication inside a package such as a box that doesn't show what's inside.
- Put the medication in the trash as close to pick up time as possible – *do not place in recycling bins.*