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Poison Prevention: Pills Can Be Poison, Too

In the wrong hands, or in the wrong dosage, pills can poison us just like cleaners or pesticides. And the same rules apply:

- Read the label first.
 - Follow all label instructions and warnings.
 - Know where to call for help. Keep the phone number for the Minnesota Poison Control System next to your phone. It serves all of Minnesota and can be reached at 1-800-222-1222, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. (This number has also been adopted by poison control systems nationwide.) Have your doctor's phone number handy as well.
 - For animal poisonings, call your vet or the Animal Poison Hotline at 855-764-7661. (A \$49 incident fee applies)
 - Store medicines out of the reach of children, and keep them in their original containers.
- Also keep the following in mind:
 - Medicines act differently on different people. Never take drugs prescribed for a friend or relative, even if your symptoms seem the same.
 - Keep track of whether a drug should be taken with or without food.
 - Always leave the light on when giving or taking medicines.
 - Don't leave multiple doses lying out on the counter.
 - When your doctor prescribes a new drug, make sure he or she knows about all the other medicines you are currently taking, including those prescribed by another doctor, over-the-counter medications, herbal supplements and multi-vitamins. Drug interactions can produce side effects or even make some medicines less effective. Vitamins, laxatives, cold remedies, antacids, and alcohol can also lead to serious problems if used too often or in combination with certain drugs.
 - Never refer to medicine as candy to get children to take it. Avoid taking medicines in front of children, since kids like to "play grown-up." Don't play doctor; children aren't small adults, so don't estimate a dose based on size. By the same token, don't double a dose because your child seems sicker than last time. Before you give your child two medicines at the same time - over the counter OR prescription - talk to your pediatrician or pharmacist. And don't let children take medicine by themselves.
 - Clean out your medicine cabinet and throw away old medicines. They can lose their potency over time, but can still cause harm to someone who shouldn't take them.
 - Keep reading. Drug labels change as new information becomes available.



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Acknowledgments:

Minnesota Pharmacists' Association

National Institute on Aging



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