

Neighborhood Pharmacists Protecting against Medication Misuse

Key Facts

Medication Use

- Over 10,000 prescription medications and 300,000 non-prescription medications are on the market
- 2 of every 3 patients leave the doctor's office with a prescription
- Last year, over 3.7 billion prescriptions were dispensed—on average 11 for every American

Medication Misuse

- Over 40% of these prescriptions are not used properly, causing:
 - ⇒ 1.5 million harmful effects
 - ⇒ 22% of hospitalizations
 - ⇒ Over 22,000 deaths per year

Americans suffer 1.5M preventable harmful effects from medication: Cost \$70 Billion

The recent death of actor Heath Ledger, from an accidental combination of prescription drugs and over-the-counter antihistamines, has brought great media attention to the harm that can come from medications. While highly publicized however, Ledger's experience unfortunately is not unique; **it is estimated that 22,000 people will die this year from medication misuse—a death rate second only to automobile accidents.** In fact, for every 1000 people on prescription drug therapy, approximately 90 seek medical attention because of drug complications. In addition, the preventable harmful effects of medication misuse cost our society over \$70 billion every year.

Stated another way, **for every \$1 spent on purchasing prescription medication, about \$1.50 is spent treating complications resulting from the accidental misuse of those medications.**

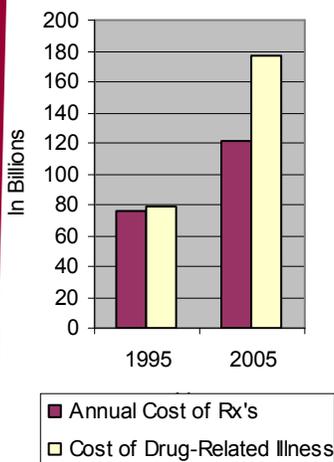
What are the primary causes of medication misuse? Over 40% are the result of the medication not being properly used—taking the medication in incorrect amounts, taking it at the wrong time, or forgetting it altogether. **Contributing to this problem: 96% of patients fail to ask questions about their medications.**

Seven Things to Know about Every Medication You Take

- Name of the medication
- Reason for the medication
- How much medication to take
- When to take the medication
- How long to continue the medication
- Possible side effects and what to do when they occur
- What to do if you forget a dose

Therefore, be safe—not a statistic—make sure you **know the 7 key items** (ABOVE) **about every medication you take**; and ask your pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter medications or herbal products.

Medication Misuse: A Growing Problem



Your Pharmacist—The neighborhood resource for help

Your community pharmacist is uniquely positioned to assist you in avoiding problems with your medications. The pharmacist is the most widely accessible health care professional in your community. Your

pharmacist can serve as an information resource for you. Your pharmacist is also trained to optimize the beneficial effects of your medication and knows many ways to help reduce the cost of medi-

cation or find help for you in paying for it. Pharmacists know proven ways to prevent disease as well—so don't forget to ask how to best maintain your health as well as use your medications.