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SP526-J-Be a Smart Health Care Consumer

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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- Keep medications out of the reach of children.
- Never hesitate to call your doctor if you're concerned about the medication you are taking.

Anticipate Medical Emergencies

- Know CPR and first aid.
- Keep your doctors' phone numbers and emergency numbers near the phone at home and work.
- If you have an emergency, notify your doctor to ensure health insurance coverage.
- Know your health insurance coverage for out-of-state emergencies.
- Keep a first-aid kit at home and in the car.
- Only use the emergency room for immediate care.

Hospital Hints

- To save money and time, have tests done before you are admitted.
- Avoid being admitted on weekends.
- Know what services are covered by your health insurance.
- Carefully check your hospital bill.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS CONTACT:

Visit the UT Extension Web site at
http://www.utextension.utk.edu/ and
the Family and Consumer Sciences Web site at
http://www.utextension.utk.edu/fcs/

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE
INSTITUTE of AGRICULTURE

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UT Extension

SP526-J

Be a Smart Health Care Consumer

A wellness publication
written by
Barbara P. Clarke,
Professor
Personal and Community Health

Only you are responsible for your health. Learn to use smart health care consumer skills. (√) Check those health actions you plan to try:

Be a Partner with Your Health Care Provider

- ❑ Provide a thorough medical history.
- ❑ Have medical records sent to your doctor before your visit.
- ❑ Keep a record of your symptoms.
- ❑ Bring medicines: prescribed, over-the-counter and vitamin/mineral supplements.
- ❑ Take notes during your visit to help you remember later.
- ❑ Have an annual physical.
- ❑ Choose a physician with whom you are comfortable.

Make Lifestyle Choices

- ❑ Stay physically active.
- ❑ Eat the **MyPyramid.gov** way.
- ❑ Manage your stress.
- ❑ Balance family, work and personal needs.
- ❑ Use safety practices at home, at work and while traveling.
- ❑ Protect skin from the sun. Use SPF of 15 or more.

Take Charge

- ❑ Know what your health insurance covers.
- ❑ Choose the services that fit your medical situation such as:
  - Office visit.
  - Non-emergency surgery.
  - Outpatient services.
  - Emergency room.
  - After-hours clinic.
- ❑ Know your medical coverage when traveling out-of-state or out of the country.

Be Prepared When Meeting with Your Doctor about a Medical Procedure

- ❑ Remember you are paying for the time with your doctor, so take time to ask questions until you understand and agree with the medical decision.
- ❑ Don't be afraid to question your doctor's recommendations. You have to live with the decision.
- ❑ Ask your doctor these questions:
  - What is the name of the procedure and what will be done?
  - What is the reason for this procedure?
  - What benefit can I expect?
  - What are the odds that I will get the benefit?
  - Are there other choices?
  - What are the possible complications or side effects?
  - How much will it cost?
  - Will medical insurance cover the cost?
  - How can I participate in making the decision?

Don't Forget Self-care Practices

- ❑ Don't hesitate to call your health provider with health questions or problems.
- ❑ Keep a record of family medical information.
- ❑ Buy a simple health reference book.
- ❑ Get regular health screenings.
- ❑ Perform monthly self-exams. For women – breast self-exams – and for men – testicular self-exams.
- ❑ Check skin for skin cancer.

Take Medication Safely

- ❑ Know the side effects of your medicines, both prescribed and over-the-counter.
- ❑ Throw away unused, out-of-date medication.
- ❑ Consider generic drugs.
- ❑ Remember over-the-counter medications and nutrient supplements are drugs.