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SP715-Your Pharmacist - A Partner in Your Health Care

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UT Extension
SP 715

Your Pharmacist: A Partner in Your Health Care

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INSTITUTE of AGRICULTURE

Did You Know That Taking Medications Is As Easy as PIE?
If you know the purpose of each medication, understand the instructions for use and dosage and know the outcomes (effects) to expect, then taking your medication can be as easy as **PIE**.
Purpose and name of the medication.
Instructions for use and dosage:
How many times a day?
Time of day?
With food or without food?
How long to take it?
What if I miss a dose?
Should I avoid alcohol, sunlight, certain foods, etc.?
Effects of the drug, both positive and negative.

Medications and Your Health

Medications are an important tool for treating both temporary problems, like a headache, and chronic conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes. But did you know that not taking your medications as prescribed can be dangerous to your health and costly to your wallet? More than half of the 4 billion prescriptions written in the United States each year are not taken as prescribed. Correct use of medications is one of the least costly ways to support your health. Protect your health and pocketbook by learning about your medications and their purposes, instructions and side effects and by seeking guidance from your pharmacist.

Why should you talk to your pharmacist?

Drug company advertisements urge you to "talk to your doctor" about their drug. But there is an additional health care professional you should talk to – your pharmacist.

Your pharmacist is a specialist who understands the chemical and physical properties of drugs, their uses and how the drugs work in the body. Pharmacists must pass licensing exams to practice in the state of Tennessee. In addition, they must complete annual requirements for continuing education. Your pharmacist can answer questions about your medications, recommend over-the-counter (nonprescription) drugs and discuss side effects of a specific medication or combination of medications.

The more medications you take, the more important it is to talk to your pharmacist. Why? Because taking multiple medications everyday can increase your chance of developing problems with side effects or drug interactions.

What should you tell your pharmacist?

To get the greatest health benefits from your prescription medications, you need to tell your pharmacist the following information:

- The names of all prescriptions and nonprescription medicines (over-the-counter medications, herbals and dietary supplements) you are taking and the conditions for which you take them.
- Any allergies you know you have to any medicines.
- Any side effects you have experienced from any medications.
- Your pregnancy status (if you are or could be pregnant).
- Any fears or concerns you have about a medication.

Your pharmacist is your partner in taking care of your health. Feel free

to ask him or her any questions you may have about your medication. For example, if your medication does not look like it did before (color or size is different) ask your pharmacist about it.

Can't Remember What Medications You Are Taking? It is helpful to have a written record of all the medications you are taking. Call your county University of Tennessee Extension office for a UT Med Minder card. You can also print the wallet-size medication record from the UT Extension Web site at www.utextension.utk.edu/publications/spfiles/SP632.pdf.

What should your pharmacist tell you?

When you take a new prescription to your pharmacy, your pharmacist will give you the following written information:

- Name of the drug.
- Purpose of the drug.
- How, when and for how long to take the drug.
- Foods, beverages or other medicines you should avoid while taking this medication.
- Side effects that may occur and what you should do if you experience these side effects.

How do you choose a pharmacy?

You can choose a pharmacy based on convenience or cost of the medication. Because your pharmacist is a partner in caring for your health, consider choosing a pharmacy where the staff is friendly and responsive to your needs. If you are using multiple health care providers, it is recommended you use the same pharmacy for all of your prescriptions. This ensures that your pharmacist will have a complete medication history when checking for problems or possible drug interactions. It will also allow you to develop a trusting relationship with your pharmacist.

Problems with Medications?

What if you have a question or problem with your medications when your pharmacy is not open? You can call the Tennessee Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 when you cannot reach your doctor or pharmacist. Poison specialists can help you with questions and concerns regarding your medications. They can also assist callers who have made an error in taking their medications, cannot identify a medication or are experiencing side effects from their medicines. This medical hotline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All calls are free of charge. To learn more about your poison center, refer to its Web site at www.tnpoisoncenter.org.

Always check with your pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter (OTC) medication. Some of these drugs are as powerful as prescription drugs and can interact with your prescription or other OTC drugs, or badly affect another health condition.

For more information about medication use and safety, check out the Be MedWise Tennessee Program, a partnership program with the National Council on Patient Information and Education, UT College of Pharmacy and UT Extension. Visit the Web page at bemedwisetn.tennessee.edu or contact your county UT Extension office:

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Center for Community Health Literacy

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