

Be careful when taking prescription drugs

The misuse of prescription drugs is a multifaceted public health and economic issue.

Improper medication use is a significant problem due to the large number of prescriptions written each year and because of the serious, sometimes life-threatening, consequences of not taking drugs as intended.

In 1984, Americans spent almost \$21 billion on prescription drugs. More than 1.6 billion prescriptions

are dispensed annually. More than half of the U.S. population receives at least one prescription drug each year, with an average of 7.5 prescriptions per year. However, from 30 to 50 percent of all prescriptions fail to produce the desired results because they are used improperly.

Reports indicate that anywhere from 20 to 90 percent of outpatients make errors in administering their medications. Serious consequences result from improper use of medica-

tions. An estimated 125,000 deaths and about 300,000 hospitalizations result yearly due to non-compliance (failure of the patient to adhere to the prescribed regimen) with drugs for the heart and high blood pressure. Estimates of up to 500,000 annual hospital admissions are related to drug reactions.

THE ELDERLY are particularly prone to misuse of prescription drugs. Senior citizens make up about

12 percent of the population, but they use 25 percent of all prescriptions.

They are more likely to have problems with drug use because they tend to have chronic illnesses and are very likely to be on multiple medications, increasing the possibility of adverse reactions.

Twenty-three percent of all nursing home admissions are related to incorrect self-administration of medicine. The most often cited rea-

son for improper drug use is non-compliance to prescribed regimens.

The five most common causes of inadvertent medication errors are: never filling the prescription, taking the medicine at the wrong intervals — not often enough or too often, forgetting to take one or more doses, taking too small or too large a dose, and discontinuing use of the medicine prematurely.

ANOTHER SERIOUS cause of unintentional medication misuse is taking medication with foods or other drugs that can lower, slow down or magnify its actions or interact to produce adverse effects. Some of these interactions are well known and many others are unpredictable, reflecting individual genetics, weight, age, sex and overall health of the patient.

A recent study conducted by the Food and Drug Administration

shows that 34 percent of consumers fail to get information about their prescriptions and don't seem to recognize the importance of this information. Other reports show that when patients and health professionals work together, compliance goes up and adverse outcomes go down.

The Michigan Society of Hospital Pharmacists reminds patients that every time they buy a medication they should be sure they know the answers to the following questions.

- What is the name of the medicine?
- What is it supposed to do?
- When should it be taken?
- Is there anything it should not be taken with?
- What side effects might occur with the medicine?

Patients should be sure to follow the directions. Don't hesitate to contact your pharmacist or doctor with questions about use of medicine.

Patient rights the topic of meeting

Do you know your rights as a patient?

At Botsford General Hospital, the Table Topics Club will address relevant

questions to this subject at its meeting scheduled Friday, Nov. 6.

Table Topics programs take place in the new administrative building at the hospital, 28050 Grand River, Farmington Hills.

The Table Topics Club is a series of programs offered by the hospital for senior citizens, and is open to the public. It provides a congenial arena for seniors to gather, enjoy a nutritious meal and conversation, and hear timely information of particular interest to their age group and living concerns.

"Do You Know Your Rights As A Patient?" talks about rights under a private insurance plan as well as under Medicare. Can you refuse hospital treatment? Can you see your medical records? How do you know what your Medicare insurance covers? What about second opinions?

What if you're not ready to leave the hospital? All of these important questions and more will be answered at this timely Table Topics session. Special emphasis will be placed on federal government regulations and rights as a Medicare participant.

Participants meet at noon for a reception followed by a hot lunch (served for \$3). The program follows the meal at 12:30 p.m. Transportation can be arranged for those not able to get to Botsford on their own for \$1.

Travel arrangements are provided as further endorsement of Botsford General Hospital's commitment to supportive programming for senior citizens.

For reservations call Botsford Hospital, 471-8709. Transportation requests should be indicated when making reservations.

Ingested antifreeze can be fatal to kids, pets

Winterizing the family car this fall can pose a serious threat to pets, wildlife and kids. The task of changing the anti-freeze in a car's radiator can be deadly if you don't take special handling precautions.

The main ingredient of permanent-type anti-freeze is ethylene glycol, a highly toxic substance with a "sweet" taste. If the used product is left in an open container, its appealing taste can attract animals and children. Ethylene glycol is so highly toxic that even once can kill a

15-pound dog. A mere teaspoon is fatal to a cat.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested anti-freeze, contact your veterinarian immediately. Every year the Michigan Humane Society treats cases of accidental poisoning due to anti-freeze ingestion.

Protect unsuspecting kids and pets from harm by disposing of used anti-freeze in leakproof containers with childproof tops. Hose down any spills, also. Their lives are worth a few minutes of your time.

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