Be Aware – Don’t Share: National Lock Your Meds Day

On October 23, Lock Your Meds Day is observed annually as part of the Lock Your Meds® national campaign, a multimedia initiative of the National Family Partnership® aimed at reducing prescription drug misuse.

According to the campaign, 42.3% of people who misuse prescription drugs obtain them from family or friends, rather than strangers or dealers. This highlights an important message for families: medications left unsecured in the home can become an unintended source of misuse. The campaign encourages adults to take steps to secure medications and prevent children, adolescents, visitors, or others from accessing medicines that were not prescribed for them.

Why It Matters

When prescribed and taken properly, medications can help treat illnesses, manage pain, and improve quality of life. However, medications can be dangerous when they are taken by someone they were not prescribed for, taken in the wrong amount, or used without medical supervision.

Children and adolescents may mistakenly believe that prescription medications are safe simply because they were prescribed by a doctor. Over-the-counter medications can also be misused because they are familiar and readily available in many homes.

When a medication is prescribed for an individual, a healthcare professional considers factors such as the person's health, other medications, dosage, and medical history. When someone takes another person's medication, those safeguards are missing. Misuse can result in serious side effects, poisoning, dependence, overdose, or death.

Take These Preventative Steps

- **Lock up medications.** Store prescription and over-the-counter medications in a secure location that children, teens, guests, and others cannot easily access.
- **Keep track of your medications**. Take inventory of the medications in your home and regularly check whether anything is missing.
- **Monitor medications prescribed to children and teens.** Know what they are taking, follow the prescribed dosage, and keep track of refills.
- **Set clear expectations.** Teach children and teens never to take medication that was not prescribed to them and never to share medication with others.
- **Talk openly about medication safety.** Explain that prescription and over-the-counter medications can be dangerous when they are not used as directed.
- **Be cautious when purchasing medications online.** Use legitimate, licensed pharmacies and avoid websites that offer prescription medications without a prescription.
- **Dispose of unused medications safely**. Whenever possible, use a drug take-back program or authorized collection site. If a take-back option is not available, follow FDA disposal instructions for your specific medication. Do not flush medications unless the label or FDA guidance specifically says to do so.

Know the Warning Signs

Medication misuse can affect people differently depending on the medication, amount taken, and individual factors.

Possible signs of misuse or overdose may include:

- Unusual changes in behavior or mood
- Excessive sleepiness or difficulty staying awake
- Confusion or disorientation
- Dizziness or loss of coordination
- Nausea or vomiting

- Agitation, anxiety, or paranoia
- Changes in heart rate or breathing
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness

Repeated misuse can also lead to tolerance, cravings, dependence, and withdrawal symptoms. Some forms of medication misuse can cause serious damage to the brain, heart, liver, kidneys, or other organs.

If someone may have taken medication incorrectly or is showing signs of a possible overdose, seek emergency medical assistance or contact Poison Control for guidance.

How to Participate

Take the Lock Your Meds Pledge

The campaign's pledge encourages families to:

- Secure medications so they are out of reach of children, guests, and others.
- Regularly inventory medications to ensure nothing is missing.
- Safely dispose of unused or expired medications.
- Educate children and family members about medication safety.
- Reinforce that medications should only be taken by the person they were prescribed for and exactly as directed.

Spread the Word

Help raise awareness about medication safety by:

- Sharing Lock Your Meds® PSAs, posters, and videos on social media.
- Sharing information with family, friends, schools, and community organizations.
- Encouraging others to secure and properly dispose of medications.

- Talking with children and teens about the risks of taking medications that were not prescribed for them.

Secure Your Medications

Simple steps can make a significant difference:

- Store medications in a locked cabinet, lockbox, or secure medicine case.
- Keep medications out of sight and reach of children.
- Keep track of how much medication you have.
- Safely dispose of medications you no longer need.
- Never share prescription medication with another person, even if they have similar symptoms.

Medication safety starts at home. Taking a few extra steps to secure, monitor, and properly dispose of medications can help prevent accidental poisonings and medication misuse. By keeping medications out of reach and talking openly with children and teens about their risks, families can help ensure that medicines are used safely and only by the people for whom they were prescribed.

This Lock Your Meds Day, remember: Be aware. Lock your meds. Don’t share.