



# spotlight on health

## How Healthy Is Your Medicine Cabinet?

(NAPSA)—Two-thirds of American medicine cabinets are likely to house expired or nearly empty medications, according to a new study for [www.mymedcab.com](http://www.mymedcab.com). The survey supports experts' advice that consumers incorporate a "check up" of their medicine cabinet into their seasonal routine to ensure it is equipped to handle family members' potential illnesses and ailments.

According to the survey, past its prime produce gets pitched more often than tablets. Eighty percent of Americans surveyed clean out their refrigerators seasonally, but only half that many (42 percent) clean out their medicine cabinets as the seasons change. More Americans (55 percent) also clean out their clothes closets seasonally.

"People should make a medicine cabinet check up part of their seasonal rituals just like changing smoke alarm batteries," said Dr. Robert Piepho, Ph.D., FCP, and dean of the school of pharmacy at the University of Missouri in Kansas City.

"It's really important for people to give their medicine cabinets a good once-over to ensure that they are familiar with their medications, that all medications are up-to-date and properly stored, and that they are equipped with essential products," Piepho said.

### Check Up Check List

To help consumers analyze and improve the health of their home medicine cabinets, [www.mymedcab.com](http://www.mymedcab.com), sponsored by the makers of Tylenol and Johnson & Johnson-Merck Consumer Pharmaceuticals, suggest they follow "the three R's":

- **READ** the labels and expiration dates and check dosing in-



structions before administering any medications—following directions is crucial in ensuring accurate administration and effectiveness;

- **REMOVE** all items that are beyond their expiration dates and those that are no longer used—expired medications may lose their potency after time;

- **RESTOCK** expired medications and other essential items—as a way to meet the individual health needs of everyone in the home.

When taking the time to "Read, Remove, and Restock" medicine cabinet contents, Piepho reminds consumers to check all of the places medicines are stored. Eighty-five percent of adults keep medication in at least one other location than their bathroom medicine cabinet, most often the kitchen (62 percent). Women often have medications stashed in their handbags or briefcases (36 percent).

"Medicine cabinet check-up time is also a good time to ensure medications are properly stored," said Piepho. "The best place for most medications is in a dry place away from sunlight. Bathrooms are often too damp and humid which can break down, degrade, or decrease the potency of medicines."

Medications should always be kept in their original packaging so that consumers can easily see the expiration date and follow the information about dosages and warnings on the back of the bottle or package. Refilling travel-size bottles or combining medications in one container can mean losing important information. It is equally important to talk to a doctor or pharmacist about any possible drug interactions between two or more medicines that might be taken at the same time.

### Medicine Cabinet Preparation

When preparing for the cold and flu season, experts suggest stocking your medicine cabinet with medications from the following categories: pain relief (acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and aspirin); allergy and sinus relief (antihistamine, decongestant, pain reliever); cold and flu relief (antitussive and expectorant); digestive health (anti-diarrheal, anti-gas, antacid, and acid reducer); and nighttime products (sleep aids). For consumers who have children, it is important to have the appropriate strength of children's medicine.

For more information about medicine cabinet essentials, visit [www.mymedcab.com](http://www.mymedcab.com) or talk to your pharmacist.

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