

Sneezin's Greetings: Health Experts Offer Valuable Advice For Preparing For The Upcoming Season

Knowing What's In Your Medicine Cabinet Is Key To Ensuring Family Health

(NAPSA)—That incessant coughing that sends spouses seeking nighttime refuge on the sofa. The dreaded summons from day-care to pick up a feverish toddler...immediately. While families across the country are making preparations for the coming months, such as switching the clothes in their closets and shopping for new outerwear, they should also look to their medicine cabinets to prepare to care for themselves or loved ones who may come down with the typical seasonal illnesses, including cold and flu.

Health experts advise conducting a full inventory and clean-up of the medicine cabinet at least once a year. With more than 150 million Americans destined to come down with either a cold or the flu this year, now is the ideal time to make sure the necessities are readily available at home.

"Consumers are quite diligent about cleaning out their cars and refrigerators, but because we tend to use the contents of the medicine cabinet on a more infrequent basis, it is easier to overlook its upkeep," said Dr. Robert Piepho, Ph.D., FCP, and dean of the school of pharmacy at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. "However, it is important to the health of everyone in the home to ensure that all medications are up to date and properly stored."

A new survey by McNeil Consumer Healthcare shows that nearly half of American households have at least one expired product in their medicine cabinet, and it is most likely to be an over-the-counter medication. To that end, it is essential to keep all medications in their original packaging. "Not only does it keep the expiration date in full view, but also keeps important information

To help consumers focus on safety and have a well-prepared medicine cabinet, McNeil Consumer Healthcare suggests following "the three Rs:"

- **READ** the labels and expiration dates and check dosing instructions before administering any medications—following directions is crucial to ensuring accurate administration and ensuring effectiveness;
- **REMOVE** all items that are beyond their expiration dates and those that are no longer used—expired medications may lose their potency over time;
- **RESTOCK** expired medications and other essential items—as a way to meet the individual health needs of everyone in the home.



about dosages and warnings that always should be read before administering any kind of medication," said Dr. Piepho. It is equally important to talk to a doctor or pharmacist about any possible interactions between two or more medications that are being taken.

When preparing the medicine cabinet for the upcoming cold and flu season, experts suggest including medications from the following categories: pain relief; nighttime products; allergy and sinus relief; cold and flu medications; antacids; anti-diarrheals; and first aid items.

While the bathroom may be the most convenient location to store medications, it is not ideal for ensuring their potency. In fact, the frequent changes in the bathroom's humidity and temperature may reduce the effectiveness of certain medications. Instead, Dr. Piepho suggests storing medications in an area of the home that is away from sunlight and has more stable, dry conditions.

For more information about medicine cabinet essentials, talk to your pharmacist and call 1-877-