



Ask Your Pharmacist

Top Medication Mistakes Revealed

(NAPSA)—Nearly half of the U.S. population takes prescription medications each month, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Add the millions who take over-the-counter (OTC) medications regularly, and you have a substantial portion of the population on medication. Unfortunately, many make errors that cause negative reactions or alter a medication's effectiveness.

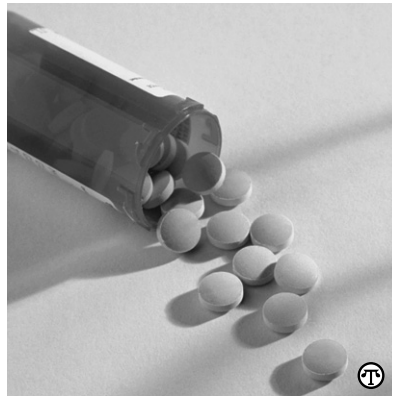
Medication mistakes are often caused by ignoring dosage instructions, self-regulating treatment or not communicating openly with doctors and pharmacists. While it may be tempting to disregard medication guidelines, complying with dosage instructions is crucial for drugs to work properly. For example, something as simple as ignoring a "take with food" instruction could cause stomach discomfort and hurt the drug's ability to function.

To help people avoid making common errors, Medicine Shoppe Pharmacies, a nationwide system of community pharmacies focused on customer care, has identified common medication mistakes on which their pharmacists educate customers. These include:

- **Ending a medication regimen early**—Stopping a prescription regimen early, even if you feel better, can cancel a drug's benefits and cause symptoms to reoccur. To ensure effectiveness, take medications throughout the entire recommended duration.

- **Taking expired medications**—Medications lose potency after the expiration date, so discard and replace all expired medications to ensure you can effectively treat symptoms.

- **Not disclosing all medications to doctors/pharmacists**—When visiting multiple doctors or pharmacists, keep each informed of all drugs you are taking, both OTC and prescription, to avoid duplicate therapies or negative



interactions.

- **Attempting to stretch out medication duration to lower costs**—Some people take a medication less frequently than prescribed in order to make a supply last longer, which weakens the medication's benefits and can cause doctors to adjust dosages incorrectly, resulting in overmedication.

- **Overdosing on medications**—Whether it's OTC or prescription, the concept "more is better" doesn't apply to medications. Stick to the recommended dosage on the instructions to avoid causing harm.

- **Confusing medications**—Taking multiple medications can tempt us to put different pills together in one bottle. Use a pill box with separate compartments to eliminate potential confusion.

"Common medication mistakes vary in severity. Some cause serious harm and others simply lessen the intended effect—but none should be taken lightly," said Ron Sroka, pharmacist and vice president for Medicine Shoppe International. "The easy way to help avoid mistakes is to fill all of your prescriptions at one pharmacy and actively engage your pharmacist as a member of your health care team."

For an interactive drug information database or to find a Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy near you, visit www.medicineshoppe.com.