



HEALTH AWARENESS

Clean Out Your Medicine Cabinet

(NAPSA)—Even though the medicine cabinet is one of the most important areas to focus household cleaning, a recent survey reveals that one-fifth of consumers do not always dispose of over-the-counter medications and prescription drugs once they realize the items have expired.

The survey, conducted for CVS/pharmacy, also found that fewer than half (49 percent) of survey respondents claim to always check expiration dates before taking over-the-counter medications. CVS/pharmacy recommends that consumers extend seasonal cleaning rituals to include their medicine cabinets. All medications should be checked at least once a year for outdated labels, as medications that have expired will not carry the same effect and may even be harmful.

"It is important to store medications properly and to keep your medicine cabinets updated and safe to everyone in the household," said Gayla Waller, RPh, CVS/Pharmacy.

When cleaning your medicine cabinet, Waller offers the following tips:

- Check all medications (over the counter and prescription) at least once a year for outdated labels. A good way to remember to check medications is to do it regularly with each change of season.

- All medications should be clearly labeled, in date, and stored in their original containers.

- Any medications that have changed in color or smell or that are no longer being taken should be discarded.

- Never carry medications in a pocket or close to the body, where



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body heat can upset the makeup of the drug.

- A secure pillbox is the best way to transport medications that must be carried in a purse or bag, and no more than a daily dose should be carried at one time.

At home, all medications should be locked in a childproof cabinet in closed, child-resistant packaging. When visiting an unfamiliar home or environment, supervise young children closely. Always keep the telephone number for poison control (1-800-222-1222) handy and call as soon as any suspicions arise.

Lastly, storing medications in the proper environmental surroundings ensures that they will remain in the best and most effective condition. Your local pharmacist can help to determine the most appropriate storage place for any medications. Some medications need to be refrigerated, while others should be protected from light, and tablets and capsules are best kept in a cool, dry place.