

Spring Clean Your Medicine Cabinet

Tips for Being Safe, Healthy, and Prepared

(NAPSA)—As we all know, spring is a time to put away winter drab, update our wardrobes and get the house ready for summer play. Unfortunately, some people skip the most crucial step in the cleaning process—checking the medicine cabinet for expired medications and stocking up with what's needed most.

Jan Engle, PharmD, Clinical Professor of Pharmacy Practice at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) College of Pharmacy, offers these medicine cabinet tips:

Medicine Must-Haves

There are several over-the-counter staples to keep on hand so you won't run out when you need them the most.

- **Allergy and Cold**—Sniffles aren't for summer, and can be controlled well with over the counter (OTC) products that keep annoying symptoms at bay. For nasal congestion, stock up with a decongestant like pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) or a nasal spray like Sinex. For a runny nose or allergy symptoms, look for a non-drowsy formulation like loratadine. For a hacking non-productive cough, try a cough suppressant containing dextromethorphan.

- **First Aid**—Stock up on multi-sized adhesive bandages and antibiotic ointments like Neosporin.

- **Stomach Problems**—H2 blockers or antacids like Tums are fine for occasional heartburn. If you have frequent heartburn (heartburn two or more days a week), you might consider a 14-day course of Prilosec OTC. It is the only one pill a day OTC medication that can relieve frequent heartburn for 24-hours.

For diarrhea, Immodium-D is one option. For multi-symptom relief from upset stomach, indigestion, nausea, heartburn, and diarrhea, Pepto Bismol is good to have.

- **Pain Relief**—It's good to have at least one analgesic in your medicine cabinet, depending on your needs. All can relieve aches and pains and fever, but acetaminophen is safe in most people



and doesn't cause stomach upset the way some of the other pain relievers can.

- **Summer Itchies**—Bug bites and poison ivy can be relieved with a cream or lotion containing hydrocortisone to prevent scratching and reduce potential for infection.

Read The Packaging

- **Dosage**—Take a medication exactly as prescribed. More doesn't mean better, and it's critical that children don't receive adult size doses.

- **Storage**—Most labels indicate that the bathroom, which tends to be moist and warm, is the worst place for medication. Try a kitchen cabinet.

"Always check the expiration date," says Pharmacist Engle, "using products that have expired could lessen the effect or make you sick."

Ask Your Pharmacist

Pharmacists are specialists when it comes to OTC and prescription medications, and they can answer questions, advise you on side effects, and most importantly, help you understand potential interactions among OTC and prescription medications.

"The little bit of time it takes to take stock of what remedies you have on hand and what you might need to throw out, can ultimately save time—and your health—later," advises Pharmacist Engle.

For more information on over-the-counter and prescription medications, log on to the American Pharmacists Association consumer Web site: www.pharmacyandyou.org.