

An Ounce of Prevention...



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How to “Talk Turkey” with Your Physician about Prescription Medication Safety

Years ago no one knew what “diversion” meant when it came to prescription drugs. It wasn’t a crime, or at least no one saw it as such, to hold on to medication just in case another family member needed it. Mom never thought twice about taking the pain pills Dad got for his toothache when she twisted her ankle. Auntie was more than happy to share one of her “nerve” pills with her niece who was nervously about to walk down the aisle. Today sharing prescription meds could spell serious legal trouble and with the current prescription drug epidemic plaguing Tennessee it could mean worse. According to the Adult Community Survey of 2015, 42% of Smith County Adults stated they have a family member that has an addiction and 30% of those addictions were related to Hydrocodone, a prescription pain medicine.¹ The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services also states that there has been a 220% increase in drug overdoses since 1999.² These overdoses are directly related to the abuse of prescription medications.

How can you manage your medications safely

and how do you know if you have a prescription that could be “diverted” for abuse? Talk to your physician and pharmacist about the following:

1. Ask if the medications you are prescribed are likely to be stolen or abused.
2. Ask about medication side effects including whether it will impair your ability to drive or work.
3. Ask if there is a danger of becoming dependent on the medication if taken over an extended period of time.
4. Talk about how to refuse someone who offers or asks for prescription medications.
5. Discuss the safest place to store your medication other than your medicine cabinet.
6. Ask how to safely dispose of prescription medications that are no longer being used or is expired (e.g. Does your county have drop boxes for unused medications?).
7. If you suspect that your medications are being stolen, ask how to report it to the appropriate authorities.

As a rule, lock up your meds, count them every two weeks, and dispose of them in a drop box. Make sure your Thanksgiving Holiday is safe for you and your family.



References:

¹ Source: Adult Community Survey 2015

² Source: Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services: Statewide Strategies to Prevent and Treat the Prescription Drug Abuse Epidemic in Tennessee,



Tennessee REDLINE
Help for Substance Abuse
1-800-889-9789



Drop Box Locations: Smith County Sheriff's Office & Carthage City Police Department

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