

## October is “Talk about Prescriptions” Month

There are over 700,000 emergency room visits each year from incorrect medication use, and 120,000 of those result in hospital admissions. The cost from these events is about \$3.5 billion. These events will continue to happen because of the high numbers of drugs being developed, the increasing older population in America, insurance coverage for more drug products, etc. Everyone should know well about his or her particular medications in order to avoid serious problems due to using them the wrong way—and do not forget nonprescription drugs (over-the-counter or OTC) because they can also be unsafe if not used correctly.

### “The Three R’s”

Drug safety is not just about doctors choosing the right medication for their patients or a pharmacy filling a prescription without mistakes. People often take too much of a dose (or too many doses per day) without even realizing it. Everyone has a duty to make sure medications are used correctly to prevent problems and get the benefits of the drug therapy. Remember the “R’s” when starting a new medication...

#### Risk

Understand that all medications (prescription and OTC) have both risks and benefits.

#### Respect

Medications have a powerful effect on the body and can provide a great value when used appropriately.

#### Responsibility

Take responsibility for learning about the medications you take and how to use them correctly.



### Acetaminophen:

#### Understanding OTC Labels

Acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol®, is found in many OTC products, including cough and cold medications. Even though acetaminophen is available without a prescription, it can cause life-threatening complications when not used the right way. Taking more than four grams of acetaminophen per day can cause serious problems such as liver damage.

Before using any medication, read the information provided on package inserts and labels. Confirm your understanding with your healthcare specialist if you have any doubt about the dose that should be taken, how often it can be taken, or when to stop taking the medicine.

#### How To Avoid Adverse Events

- ✓ Learn about your medication. Know what the drug is for, how to take it, and what to expect. Ask questions.
- ✓ Keep a list handy of all your medications, including OTC products.
- ✓ Talk to your physician about your medications before leaving the doctor’s office.
- ✓ Talk to your pharmacist about your medications when picking up a prescription or choosing an OTC product.

For those taking many medications throughout the day, pill organizers can guide in taking the right medication at the right time. The most important thing to remember is **when in doubt, ask!** It really is better to be safe than sorry.

For informational purposes only; not meant to supersede the advice of a physician.  
If you have questions regarding this information, please consult your medical professional.