



LifeSmarts
Learn it. Live it.

Key Points

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TAKING

Prescription medications should only be used as directed by your healthcare provider. Taking the wrong dose—or someone else's medicine—can be dangerous.

UNDERSTAND INTERACTIONS

Medicines can interact with food, drinks, or other medications. Always ask your pharmacist or provider before mixing prescriptions.

SAFE STORAGE MATTERS

Keep medications in their original containers, stored securely away from children, pets, and others who might misuse them.

Core Concepts

Rx VS. OTC

Prescription (Rx) drugs require a doctor's order; over-the-counter (OTC) medicines do not.

KEEP A MEDICINE LIST

Track all your prescriptions, OTC meds, and supplements to avoid harmful interactions and errors.

MISUSE VS. ABUSE

Taking too much of a medication, skipping doses, or using it in ways not prescribed is misuse. Sharing or using pills to get high is abuse.

ASK ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS

Every medicine has potential side effects. Know what to watch for and report anything unusual to a trusted adult or healthcare provider.

NEVER SHARE PRESCRIPTIONS

What's safe for one person could be harmful to another—even if symptoms seem the same.

KNOW WHO TO ASK

If you're unsure about dosage, side effects, or refills, talk to a pharmacist or healthcare provider—not the internet.

DISPOSAL IS PART OF SAFETY

Expired or unused medications should be taken to proper disposal sites—not flushed or tossed in the trash.

Prescription Medicine Safety

Additional Resources

FDA – Safe Disposal of Medicines

Official FDA guide for safely disposing of expired or unused prescription drugs

<https://bit.ly/3UYIv4V>

CDC – Free Mind Campaign: Mental Health & Drug Use Awareness

CDC's new youth-focused campaign exploring the connection between mental health and prescription drug misuse

<https://bit.ly/4fq5lMe>

YouTube - Partnership to End Addiction

Teen Substance Use Trends in 2025

<https://bit.ly/4mztxOz>

YouTube - Safe medication use, storage, and disposal

Opening the conversation of safe medication use, storage, and disposal

<https://bit.ly/46JTfeM>

Listen to the Podcast



Explore and Explain

1. Why is it dangerous to take someone else's prescription medication, even if you have similar symptoms?
2. How can improper storage of prescription drugs put others at risk, especially children and pets?
3. What are the risks of misusing medications like painkillers, ADHD meds, or anti-anxiety drugs?
4. How can you safely dispose of unused or expired prescription medications?

Prescription drugs can help when used correctly—but misuse, even unintentionally, can lead to serious health risks or addiction.

Rx Medicine Safety

Acronyms

DEA

Drug Enforcement Administration

FDA

Food and Drug Administration

NDC

National Drug Code

PBM

Pharmacy Benefit Manager

Rx

Prescription



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Vocabulary

ADHERENCE

Taking your medicine exactly as your doctor or label instructs

BLACK BOX WARNING

The FDA's strongest warning label for drugs with serious or life-threatening risks

CONTRAINDICATION

A condition or situation where a medicine should not be used because it may be harmful

DOSAGE

The exact amount of medicine you're supposed to take

DRUG INTERACTION

When medicines affect each other and cause side effects or reduced effectiveness

MISUSE

Using medicine incorrectly—such as taking the wrong dose, using someone else's prescription, or for non-medical reasons

PHARMACIST

A healthcare professional who dispenses medications and helps you use them safely

POLYPHARMACY

Taking several medicines at the same time, increasing the risk of side effects or interactions

SIDE EFFECT

An unwanted reaction or result from taking a medicine, even if it's working as intended

TOLERANCE

When your body gets used to a medicine over time and it doesn't work as well