

Taking Your Medicines Safely & Poison Prevention SCRIPT

Slide 1

Hi, my name is _____. I am an educator with _____. Thank you for coming today. Today's program about medicine safety and poison prevention is provided by the Utah Poison Control Center.

Slide 2 – Who Are We?

What is a poison control center? Poison Centers are 24 hour a day, 7 days a week call centers that provide immediate treatment advice for poison exposures and poison prevention information.

Slide 3 – Why Are We Here?

Over the past few years, national poison center data shows that calls involving adults over 65 are often related to medicine problems such as taking too much of a medicine or combining medicines. Five out of six people 65 or older take at least one prescription drug and almost half take three or more medicines.

The goal of this session is to teach ways to prevent medicine problems from occurring, and highlight poison prevention tips for the home.

[Ask the group what they consider a medicine.]

Slide 4 - Definitions

For today's program, I am going to refer to prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, herbals, vitamins, dietary supplements, and some foods and fruit juices as health remedies. An example of an herbal is St John's Wort. An example of a dietary supplement is Calcium. When it comes to medicines, we are in charge of our own health. We shop at the pharmacy, the supermarket, and health food stores. By choosing one product or another, and combining products, we may affect how we respond to our medicine.

Slide 5 – Sources of Information

The best way to take charge of our health is to gather the information we need. We gather health information from a variety of sources – doctors, nurses, pharmacists, poison centers, ads and stories on television and in magazines, from friends, family, books and the internet.

[How many people use the internet? If the majority of the audience does not use the internet, skip to slide 7; otherwise go to slide 6.]

Slide 6 – Finding Good Sources on the Internet

Of course we want to trust all the information we hear and read, but it's important to evaluate the sources of our information. I want to highlight the internet. Not all

information on the internet is reliable. Here are some tips to review the websites you check for health information. First, check the source of the site. Government, educational, and non-profit sites have web addresses ending with gov, edu, or org. Also, check that the information is current and the date the site was last updated. This is usually noted on the bottom of the home page.

Slide 7 – Poisoning Exposures

What about poisonings? When we hear about poisons we often think about children. We will talk a little bit about that later on. What about adults? Many calls to poison centers across the country involve adults over 60 years old and medicine problems. Unintentional poisoning may be caused by health remedy interactions.

[Ask the group what they think an interaction is.]

Let's discuss what we mean by an interaction.

Slide 8 – Example Interactions

A general definition is, "a combined action of 2 or more things." In the case of medicines, this could be something good or it could mean an unwanted effect or an unintentional poisoning. Certain combinations of medicines with other medicines, juice, herbals, or vitamins may change the way the medicine works. This can result in the medicines not working at all or an unintentional poisoning.

[Have any of you ever experienced this? Allow the group to give examples.]

We have a handout available that lists potentially dangerous combinations of some herbal remedies and prescription medicine. This handout only includes a few examples. There are many.

[Read 2 or 3 as examples from the handout.]

I want to take you through 3 different stories. Then we can talk about what the potential problems are, if any. These are only examples. Every person and situation is different.

Slide 9 – Story #1

Joe has been taking warfarin (Coumadin), a blood thinner, once a day for the past year. One day while watching television, Joe sees a commercial promoting a children's aspirin for heart conditions. Joe's father died of a heart attack at a young age, so he figures it would be a good idea to start taking aspirin himself.

[What do you think about Joe's situation? Why or why not? (Let the group give answers)]

OK let's talk about the problem. Basically, the medicine he is already taking, warfarin, is a blood thinner. Taking aspirin with it might be a problem, because

aspirin can also thin the blood causing symptoms such as easy bruising or abnormal bleeding.

Let's look at the second story.

Slide 10 – Story #2

Ellen bike rides daily and drinks grapefruit juice every day at breakfast. She feels healthy with lots of energy. After her annual checkup, Ellen's doctor said her cholesterol was too high and prescribed a cholesterol-lowering medicine. To keep healthy, Ellen decides to keep drinking the grapefruit juice every morning and added a glass at lunch.

[Is this a good idea or not? (Let the group answer)]

Let's discuss the potential problem. Grapefruit juice competes with the way some medicines are handled by the body resulting in a build up of some medicines. This could lead to significant muscle problems in the case of the cholesterol medicine.

Slide 11 – Story #3

Sara recently retired from her job with the city government after 30 years. She is enjoying her free time, going on hikes, boating, and visiting her grandchildren. Sara takes a common pain reliever, acetaminophen, often for mild aches and pains. When Sara develops a cold, she begins taking a multi-symptom cough and cold medicine.

[Is this a problem? (Let the group answer)]

The problem in this story is that Sara was already taking acetaminophen for aches and pains and added the cold medicine, which may also contain acetaminophen. Even a few days of too much acetaminophen could potentially cause liver damage.

These stories demonstrate examples of potential problems from medicine interactions. There are many common medicines that can interact and result in serious health issues. Always speak with the doctor, pharmacist or poison control center when making changes with the medicines or health remedies you are taking. As we saw, something as innocent as grapefruit juice can affect our medicines.

[If you are providing the *Medicines and You* brochure, show it at this time and tell the audience that it reviews drug interaction details and has much more helpful information. It is downloadable from the following website:]

[*Medicines and You* brochure:

www.fda.gov/cder/consumerinfo/MedandYouEng.pdf]

Slide 12 – 6 Key Questions

To help you remember some of the questions to ask your health care provider, I want to remind you of six important questions to keep in mind:

1. What is the name of my medicine?
2. Why am I taking this medicine?
3. What side effects could I have?
4. How much and how often do I take this?
5. What should I do if I miss a dose or double the dose of my medicine?
6. While taking this medicine, should I avoid alcohol, driving, certain foods, drinks, medicines, vitamins, or herbals?

You should get the answers to these questions when you're at the doctor's office, pharmacy or any time you begin to take something new for your health, including over-the-counter medicine, vitamins, supplements or even new "miracle" foods that you read about. Keep in mind that there is a possibility of interactions with herbals, vitamins and other over-the-counter products.

Slide 13 – Patient Information Sheet

If you do not remember to ask your doctor or pharmacist these questions, you can refer to the patient/product information insert that comes with all prescriptions. Patient information sheets contain many of the answers to these questions. Some pharmacies can print these in large print or another language. If you do not understand what this insert is saying, do not hesitate to contact your doctor, pharmacist, or the poison control center.

I also want to point out here that if you think you are having any side effects or a bad reaction to a medicine, speak to your doctor right away about your concerns.

Today we wanted to raise awareness about the potential for interactions. Now let's discuss some tips for managing your medicines.

Slide 14 – Medicine Management Tools

You can keep track of your medicines and other health remedies using a medicine reminder box or keeping a list. It's important to pick a system that works for your individual lifestyle.

One very good way to reduce the risk of unwanted interactions is to only use one pharmacy for filling prescriptions. The sophisticated computer systems that pharmacies use can flag potential problems at the time a prescription is filled.

Also, I'd like to mention that If you live with, care for, or are visited by children, make sure that children can't get into your medicines, vitamins, or herbals by using a child-resistant container or box for storing your medicines and keeping them out of reach.

Slide 15 – Pill Reminders

There are many ways to help a person remember to take their medicines at the correct time. Calendars work for some, and talking medicine bottles or caps may be an option, although they are often expensive. Putting medicines into a pill reminder is another good way to tell if each dose has been taken. With these containers, a full week's supply of pills can be separated out according to time of day.

Ask your doctor to schedule your medicines so they are as simple as possible. Check with your pharmacist to be sure your medicines are OK out of their original container – some like nitroglycerin or Imitrex (for migraines) must stay in their own bottle. Your pharmacist can also help with the initial organization of your medicines.

These containers also work well if you travel. Using one that has an adult-locking mechanism means that youngsters may be less likely to accidentally get into your medicines.

Slide 16 – Medicine Journal or Diary

The doctor needs to know if you are feeling any bad effects from your medicine. Keep a note pad or diary to record problems or questions about your medicines. Also take notes during or right after a doctor visit to make sure the information is remembered later. If you need refills, include this information in your notes. You can also include blood sugar readings or blood pressures in this same record.

To make sure that medicine is taken on schedule, some people like to check off medicine doses as they take them. One way to do that is to use a calendar to write down the times your medicine is due each day (for instance 8 a.m., noon, 4 p.m., etc). After you take each dose, make a check mark by the time.

Slide 17 – Household Poison Prevention

Medicines aren't the only way we can get poisoned. We are around poisons everyday. Simple precautions can help to keep those around us safe.

Slide 18 – What is a Poison?

Poison can hurt you – or even kill you – if you eat them, breathe them, or get them in your eyes or on your skin. Paracelsus (1493-1541), a physician and father of toxicology, wrote "All things are poisons, for there is nothing without poisonous qualities...it is only the dose which makes a thing not poison.

Slide 19 – Unintentional Poisoning

Poisonings occur in many ways: medication errors, which we have already discussed in detail, children getting into things they shouldn't, mixing chemicals, and improper storage. Look-alikes are a common problem, especially with children. Many medicines look like candy and many cleaners look like beverages. When a product is not being used, be sure to secure the cap properly and put in a latched cabinet.

Slide 20 – Keep Loved Ones Safe

Up to 20% of poisonings among children involve grandparent's medication. Most of these poisonings occur when medicines or other health remedies were left on a table, countertop, low shelf or in a purse. Children like to play with grandma's purse. But, it is a goldmine for poisoning. Some examples of poisons that might be in a purse include: prescription and over-the-counter medicines, eye drops, pepper spray, and many others. It is important for all of us to poison proof our environment inside and outside of the home.

Slide 21 - Prevention

Simple safety strategies can prevent most poisonings.

[Review the prevention strategies on the slide.]

Slide 22 – When to Call the Poison Center

The poison center is available to you 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. You should call the poison center for any of these reasons.

[Review the bullets on the slides.]

Slide 23 – If a Poisoning Occurs

If you think you or someone in your care has been exposed to a poison, don't hesitate to call the poison center. Call FAST to treat a poisoning! Call FIRST to prevent a poisoning! Our services are always free and private and the number works anywhere in the US.

Slide 24 – Thank You

In order to be the best wife, husband, mother, father, friend, or grandparent, it's up to you to take care of yourself and keep your environment safe.

Thanks for your interest. Do you have any questions?

OPTIONAL

Introduce the video – see the lesson plan

Play the Tic Tac Toe recall game – see lesson plan