Communicate Before You Medicate
Pharmacy Outreach Program
The University of Rhode Island
College of Pharmacy
What to Know About Prescription Medications

- What is this drug supposed to do?
- How should I take this prescribed drug?
- What are common side effects?
- Is a generic drug available?
- How long do I need to take this prescription?
Proper Medication Use

• Taking medicines incorrectly may prevent you from getting better, may even worsen your condition

• Don’t be afraid to ask your doctor or pharmacist questions

• Keep a list of your medications with you and at home

• Store your medications appropriately

• Don’t use expired medications
How to Take Your Medication Properly

- Fill your prescription on time
- Take your medication at the right time and dose
- Consult with your doctor before stopping a medication
- Avoid skipping doses of your medicine
  - Know what to do if you miss a dose accidentally
- Take your own medicine – never share!
Questions to Ask Your Pharmacist

• When should I expect this medication to start working?

• What happens if I miss a dose?

• Would this drug interact with another drug that I am taking?
  • Any special food/drink considerations?

• Are there tests that I need to take while I am on this medication?

• Is there any written information available about the medicine?
Reading Prescription Labels

- Name
- Prescription number
- Number of refills remaining
- Expiration date of prescription
- Expiration date of medication
- Directions, strength, and quantity
Avoiding Drug Interactions

75% of people 45 or older take 4+ Rx medications daily!

- The more medications you take, the greater the chance for them to interact and cause problems
How to Be Safe!

• Brown-bag it!
  • Give your medicines a yearly check-up with your doctor or pharmacist
  • Remember OTC’s: herbals, supplements

• When you notice any new symptom, ask your doctor right away if it might be related to any medicine you are taking
Preventing Medication Errors

• Make sure all members of your health care team (pharmacists, physicians) know about all your medications
  • Prescriptions
  • OTC herbals and supplements

• If possible, use only one pharmacy for all of your prescription medications

• Remember, YOU are in the best position to avoid drug-related problems
Generic vs. Brand Name Medications

• All medicines have three names: brand, generic, and chemical. For example:
  • **Brand:** Claritin
  • **Generic:** Loratadine
  • **Chemical:** Ethyl 4-(8-chloro-5,6-dihydro-11H-benzo[5,6]cyclohepta[1,2-b]pyridin-11-ylidene)-1-piperidinecarboxylate
• Little difference other than name, color, shape, and price

• Generic drug must be tested by the FDA in order to be approved
  • Must have the same active ingredients, strength, and dosage form

• Remember: **generic drugs are just as safe as brand drugs and work the same!**
What if I Don’t Want Generic Medication?

- RI requires pharmacists to substitute less expensive generic drugs for many brand names unless specified
  - Prescriber must write “brand name medically necessary” on your prescription if you do not want the generic
  - In RI, you may sign for brand name

- Remember: this may result in a higher co-pay* from your insurance company
Drug Formularies

• What is a **formulary**?
  • A list of prescription drugs that your health plan will cover
What does “tiered formulary” mean?

1st tier: Minimal co-payment for a lower-cost generic drug if available

2nd tier: Somewhat higher co-payment for preferred brand-name drug in the formulary

3rd tier: Even higher co-payment for a brand-name drug not preferred in the formulary

Non-formulary: Certain drugs that are not included in prescription coverage formulary
Drug Formularies

- What if my doctor prescribes a medication that is not in my health plan’s formulary?
  - **Prior Authorization:** Prescriber must call your insurance company to tell them it is medically necessary for you to take this medication
  - Prescribe another medication that is covered

- How can I find out which medications my health plan will cover?
  - Contact your health plan directly and they will send you an updated formulary list
Drug Advertisements and the Internet

• Just because they say it is good does not mean that it is good for you!

• Always ask your pharmacist!
Role of the Pharmacist

• Pharmacists are ready and willing to share their knowledge

  • **Optimal drug therapy for patients**
    • Drug interactions & side effects

  • Treatment of various medical conditions

  • Education and promotion of public health

  • Refer where to get medical care
Thank You!

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