

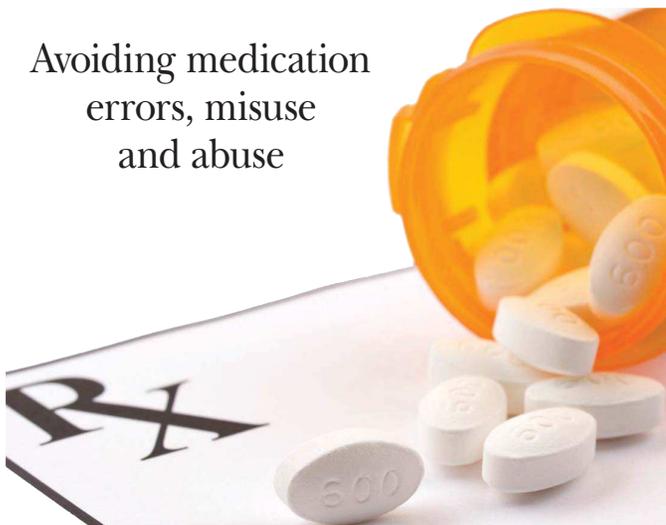
# THE SUN CHRONICLE

Attleboro-North Attleboro, Mass.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2017

\$2.50 newsstand

## Avoiding medication errors, misuse and abuse



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**F**orgetting to set your alarm or carry your wallet can disrupt your daily routine.

Consequences of these mistakes are not nearly as harmful, though, as forgetting to take your medication, confusing your medication schedule or dosage, or taking drugs that could interact negatively with each other.

Adverse or harmful events from medication can result in visits to emergency departments, doctors' offices or other outpatient settings, or even hospitalizations. Many of these adverse events are avoidable.

People who take medications must work in cooperation with their health care providers, including their physician and pharmacist, in taking precautions against medication errors.

The medical team at Sturdy Memorial Hospital works diligently with patients to ensure that all precautions are taken to avoid a patient returning due to an adverse event. However, we realize that medication dosage instructions are not always easy to comprehend.

Patients and family members should feel comfortable in admitting when they do not understand why they are being given a particular medication or what side effects they should look out for.

Including family members or caregivers into the discussion and plan of care can provide additional help in recalling medication information.

Talking over your medication instructions with your doctor, and with someone else you trust, can help you

make better decisions and remember instructions.

As we begin the new year and many enter into new health and wellness goals, including medication safety into those goals is a good idea.

Following are safety tips to avoid medication errors, misuse or abuse:

- ▶ Clean out your medicine cabinet of unused or expired medications
- ▶ Dispose in a safe manner through a medication disposal center
- ▶ Know dosing instructions such as "take with food or no food" and the time of day
- ▶ Always follow the instructions
- ▶ Bring written questions with you to ask your health care provider, and take notes to keep a record of the answers
- ▶ Try to use the same pharmacy, if you buy all your medications at the same pharmacy, your prescription records will be in the same place
- ▶ Keep a list of, and tell your doctor about, everything you are taking

When creating your medication list, you should include all prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal and dietary supplements.

Be sure to include the dosage and schedule information for each.

Note if you have any known medication allergies or if you have any other illness or medical condition that a treating doctor should be aware of, this includes if you are pregnant, nursing or planning to become pregnant. It is important to carry this list with you at all times so it is available at all medical appointments or in the event of an emergency.

To receive a free "My Medical Pro-

file" card, which will help you keep track of your medication instructions and allergies, call Sturdy Memorial's Volunteer & Student Services at 508-236-8800.

While anyone who takes medications is at some risk of a harmful effect, there are particular groups more at risk than others for unintentional medication misuse.

Adults age 65 and older are more likely to use multiple medications and to have difficulty handling them and interpreting instructions due to declining vision, hearing, and memory. Children are also more vulnerable, as parents and caregivers can be confused by instructions for use based on age, weight, or other medical conditions.

Taking extra precautions when taking medications or administering medications to these age groups will help prevent dangerous reactions.

Follow instructions carefully, and consider purchasing products that will help you organize your medications and remind you to take them, such as containers that you can fill with pill dosages for the week.

Your pharmacist can help find the right product for you.

Most important to remember, always ask your health care provider if you're unsure about medication uses, dosages, disposal or any other questions you may have.

If you're experiencing a bad reaction to medicine, visit the nearest emergency room.

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