

6 Medication Mistakes That Can Wreck Your Health

Thirty-one different prescription drugs—that's the staggering number of medications taken by the average American over 65 each year.

That shocking statistic explains in large part why one of the gravest health threats many people face is not from disease. It's from the medicines they take to fight disease.

When patients take so many powerful medications in combination, it is inevitable that some of them will cause damaging side effects.

Dr. Ellen Kamhi, author of *The Natural Medicine Chest*, tells Newsmax Health that an estimated 5 percent of hospital admissions—more than 1 million per year—are due to drug side effects.

Here are six common medical mistakes that can do grave damage to your health:

1. Taking the wrong dosage. Drugs affect children and the elderly differently. Therefore, it is crucial that these age groups receive the right dose of medicine from their doctor. For example, Valium remains twice as long in an older person's system than in a young person's. Children's dosage should be correlated with their weight. It's important to know your child's exact weight when filling a prescription.

2. Measuring wrong. Do not use kitchen utensils, like teaspoons or tablespoons, to measure liquid medications. Use the provided dosing cap, syringe or dropper. Otherwise your dose could be way off, says Dr. Kamhi.

3. Skipping the fine print. A study revealed that 54 percent

of people do not read side-effect warnings on drug labels. If you don't want to read the fine print, ask your doctor or pharmacist about a drug's side effects before you take it. Pay special attention to the warning label and the information booklet that accompanies most prescription drugs.

4. Ignoring drug interaction warnings. To prescribe the right medication at the right dosage, your doctor must know all medications and supplements you are taking. The more drugs you take, the greater your risk of adverse drug reactions. Be aware that certain medications interact with foods, alcohol and other beverages, so ask your doctor when and how to take them, and double-check with your pharmacist to make sure they are compatible.

5. Stopping medications midcourse. Certain medications, like antibiotics, may not be effective unless you finish the entire treatment. Others may cause serious side effects if you stop taking them abruptly. For example, a missed dose of glaucoma medication can result in optic nerve damage or blindness.

6. Taking prescriptions blindly. Double-check your prescriptions. Doctors are only human, and they make mistakes. Make sure the prescription matches the medication you are given at the pharmacy. This is crucial. If you notice any discrepancies, call your doctor immediately.

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