

let's talk about

health

FREE PERSONAL MEDICINES MANAGEMENT CARD

Head into your local pharmacy and pick up your free medicines management card. This is a quick and easy way to record the medicines you are taking and it fits perfectly into your pocket or handbag.



Available while stocks last

MidCentral District Health Board

Managing Your Medicines

...if in doubt, check it out

Are the pills, creams, and supplements you are using making you better, or will they mean an urgent trip to your district's emergency department?

Everyday people pick up medicines from their pharmacy, supermarket, health store, or dairy. In New Zealand, we are privileged to have access to over 2000 subsidised pharmaceuticals and unlimited access to unsubsidised pharmaceuticals. Access to medicines isn't the problem; "it's how we are managing them".

Your local pharmacist is a great resource for helping you manage your medicines, but they can only do this effectively when they know what you are taking and how you take it.

We talked to community pharmacist advisor Karen Lombard, about managing medicines.

Karen said: "When we talk about medicines, we are talking about the cold medication you pick up from your supermarket, as well as the antibiotics your doctor prescribed you.

"The purpose of medication is to make you feel better. Medicines can prevent disease, reduce the chance of heart attacks or stroke,

and prevent you from coming to the Emergency Department. Taken incorrectly, they might not do the job they are meant to, or may even make you sick.

"These days pharmaceuticals are very sophisticated; they can have a sustained release or an extended release, some are required to be taken with food, some aren't, some can upset the tummy, or cause indigestion and heart burn if taken incorrectly. Their formulations are very complex and this does require you to take them as directed to gain the maximum benefits.

"Everyone is different, and everyone reacts differently to medication. One tablet can cure one person, but make another sick.

"Medicines sitting around the home can be magnets for children. There is also the temptation to take them down the track for something they were not prescribed for. What's right for you now, may not be right at another time, or for someone else. If medicines are no longer needed, get rid of them. Take them to your local pharmacy and they will dispose of them safely.

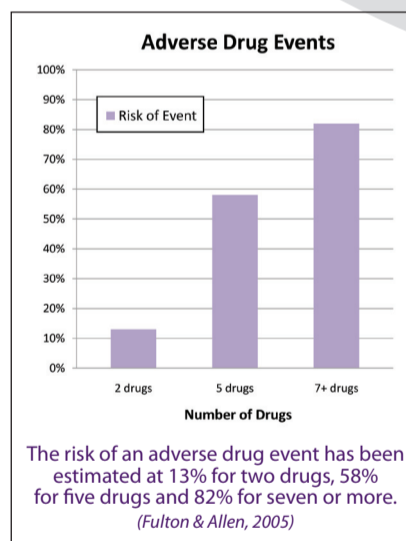
"Storage is important for most medicines. Sometimes a convenient storage space is not the most ideal. Many medications degrade with heat and light. So, keeping them in direct sunlight or in a hot glove box of the car, could make them ineffective. Commonly used medications that degrade with heat include: angina spray, Ventolin, and other asthma relievers.

"Take responsibility for your health and take the time to learn about your medicines. What they are, what dose you should be taking, how they should be taken, and how they should be stored.

"With antibiotics, GPs commonly find people stop taking their medicine as soon as they start to feel well again. However, a course of antibiotics is prescribed for a reason and many people will find themselves back at the doctor if they don't take their medicine as it has been prescribed.

"We have all heard of tragic situations where people have mistakenly mixed up their medications, or stored them in places where they lose their effect and become useless in an emergency situation.

"If you are unsure about any of your medicine, ask your local pharmacist, they are there to help."



RULES AND TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR MEDICINE

Finish the whole course of medicine you are prescribed.

Dispose of old, unused and expired medicines.

Keep an up-to-date list of the medicines you are taking. Your pharmacist can print you a list of the medicines you have been prescribed.

Give a copy of this list to a close family member or friend.

Talk to your pharmacist about putting your medicines into blister packs that separate them into the correct dosages to be taken at the correct time.

Your medicine only works when you take it.

Fitting your medicine into your daily routine will help you remember to take it. Keep your medicine near your alarm clock or by your toothbrush, or set an alert on your phone.

It is always best to figure out for yourself how your medicine affects you before trying to drive or operate heavy machinery. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the side effects of your medicines.

Follow the storage directions of your medicine.

Medicines do not just come in tablet form. They also include eye drops, creams, and syrups. Make sure you tell your health professional all the medicines you are taking so as to avoid adverse events.

FACTS BOX

- Your risk of harm increases with the number of medicines you take.
- 4.9% of admissions to hospital are due to the negative effects of medicines.
- Elderly people are four times more likely to be admitted to hospital due to negative effects of medicines than non-elderly. Their rate of admissions to hospital is 16.6%.
- MDHB spends approximately \$45 million on medicines dispensed in the community, and another \$11.25 million on medicines used in the hospital, making an annual medicines budget of around \$56 million for our district (160,000 people). This equates to around \$350 per person annually.
- There are 32 pharmacies in the MDHB region (Feilding, Horowhenua, Otaki, Palmerston North, Tararua).



Advisory Pharmacist, Karen Lombard (left), looks at the new medicines management card with Pharmacist Tina Lin from City Health Pharmacy in Palmerston North.

Let's Talk About Health is a regular column produced by MidCentral District Health Board. If you have any feedback or suggestions for future topics, please phone (06) 350 8945 or email midcentraldhb.govt.nz