**Prescription for a Healthy Holiday**

*Tips to Safeguard Your Medicines*

For many people, the holiday season means extra visits with family and friends, creating fun memories, sharing traditions, and enjoying the warm glow of family.

With all the decorating and activities, it’s easy to let safety slip off your To Do list. But this is an excellent time to make sure powerful medicines don’t fall into the wrong hands.

Prescriptions and over-the-counter remedies we rely on can be dangerous to others, and not just to children. It is true that about 60,000 young children are taken to the emergency room each year because they got into medicines left within easy reach. Unfortunately, older kids and teens often experiment with drugs they find in someone else’s medicine cabinet.

A surprising number of heroin users started abusing drugs by taking opioid pain killers stolen from a family member. In fact, drug addiction crosses ALL age groups, and it often starts with prescription medicines.

Six ways to safeguard your prescription drugs – and your loved ones:

1. Keep all medicines and over-the-counter items—especially cough syrup, sleep aids, and motion sickness medicine—locked up, or move them to a place where they won’t be easily found.
2. Sort through all your medicines and get rid of old or unused ones. The label will tell you how to dispose of them. Before you put them in the trash, mix them with something that tastes bad, like cat litter or old coffee grounds, and then put them in a sealed bag or old container and place it in the trash. (Most medicine should not be flushed because it gets into creeks and rivers.) Ask the pharmacy or police department about “drug take-back” programs for an even safer method of disposal.
3. Keep track of your medicines on a regular basis (weekly), especially opioids or other pain killers, including how many pills you should have.
4. Check around your home for old medicines. Purses, coat pockets, kitchen cupboards, bureau drawers, and hall closets are common places to find old medicines.
5. If you take prescriptions with you when staying in someone else’s home, quietly ask your host or another trusted adult to lock them up or find a secure place to store them. Suitcases and purses are not safe places to keep powerful prescriptions.
6. Keep the Poison Help number handy in case of emergencies: (800) 222-1222.

More information on how to avoid becoming and “unwitting supplier” of prescription medications is available from the [Food and Drug Administration](https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm272905.htm).