Local Retired Pharmacist Educates Students and Community About Poison Prevention

Harrisburg, PA - More than 2 million poisonings are reported each year to more than 57 poison control centers in the US. Over 90% of these poisonings happen in the home. National Poison Prevention Week, which was established in 1961, is March 16-22, 2014. It is important to raise awareness of preventing poisoning not only from medications but also from many other common household products and the invisible gas carbon monoxide.

There are many ways to prevent poisoning from medications:

- Proper medication use can reduce the amount of old medications remaining around the house. Taking the medications as they are prescribed, and not forgetting to take them is helpful as well.
- Knowing the signs and symptoms of side effects from medication overdose. Ask your pharmacist for more information.
- Proper medication storage can prevent medications from going bad. Most of the medications can be stored at room temperature. Do not store your medications in moist areas, including bathroom cabinets.
- Proper medication disposal can reduce potential poisoning in children and pets. Medications can be ground down and mixed with either kitty litter or coffee grounds. You can put the mixture into a container or an envelope and throw it away in the trash.
- National Drug Take-Back Day is April 26, 2014. Locations will be announced on April 1st. This day allows you to dispose of any of your old medications.
- When you suspect poisoning from anything, call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.
Pharmacists have promoted poison prevention with many different programs. Stanton Jonas, B.S. Pharm, R.Ph, M.P.H., a retired pharmacist in the Pittsburgh area, has been actively raising awareness of poison prevention in Allegheny County since the 1980s. He organized March-Poison Prevention Month in Allegheny County in conjunction with SafeKids Allegheny County and receives major support from Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, the Pittsburgh Poison Center, Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh and Duquesne University Mylan School of Pharmacy students. Quantities of Home Check Lists are distributed to pharmacies for their patients to raise the awareness of poison prevention in children. In addition to this, Jonas also works with local fire departments to have them install donated carbon monoxide alarms.

In 2012, 35% of the calls to the poison prevention center were due to poisoning in children age less than 3 years old. 49% of the phone calls were for children age less than 6 years old. Mr. Jonas expresses that while we are now more aware of the dangers of accidental poisoning, it is important to continue increasing the awareness about poison prevention to kids in K-2. He recommends talking to children about invisible gases such as carbon monoxide, liquids such as detergents and bubble bath and candy flavored vitamins. These are a few examples among the many items discussed to reduce the chance of poisonings in the home.

To learn more about how you can prevent poisonings in your home, talk with your pharmacist about medication safety or visit http://www.poisonprevention.org/.

Founded in 1878, the Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association is a professional membership organization of more than 2,000 pharmacists and pharmacy students across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, representing almost all facets of pharmacy practice. As the leading voice of pharmacy in Pennsylvania, it promotes the profession through advocacy, education, and communication to enhance patient care and public health.

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