

Myrtle Potter Media, Inc.

5

PRESCRIPTIONS YOU WON'T FIND IN YOUR DOCTOR'S BAG

Vol. 03



Medication Mishaps

**PATIENTS
BEWARE**

Myrtle Potter

Your Trusted Voice in Healthcare™

Published by Myrtle Potter Media, Inc. eBooks

Table *of* CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	Page 1
Prescription #1: Get friendly with your pharmacy	Page 2
Prescription #2: Be a reporter	Page 3
Prescription #3: Be clear, get clear.	Page 4
Prescription #4: Don't play doctor	Page 5
Prescription #5: Follow directions to a "T"	Page 6
• <i>Final thoughts</i>	Page 8
• <i>About Myrtle</i>	Page 9
• <i>Copyright</i>	Page 10
• <i>About the publisher</i>	Page 11

5 PRESCRIPTIONS YOU WON'T FIND IN YOUR DOCTOR'S BAG: MEDICATION MISHAPS - PATIENTS BEWARE

I began my career in the healthcare industry nearly 30 years ago selling adult disposable diapers for Procter and Gamble. I eventually rose to lead some of the biggest healthcare companies in the world. I was a vice president at Merck, president at Bristol-Meyers Squibb and later became the president and chief operating officer of Genentech, the world's biotechnology powerhouse. Along the way I was credited with the launch of some amazing life-changing drugs including; Prilosec, Plavix and Avastin.

I share my history with you not because I am looking for kudos, but because I have an incredible respect for the pharmaceutical industry. Some of the best minds in science spend years creating pharmaceutical solutions for some very troubling medical conditions.

Even with all of that said, we as consumers face some daunting challenges when it comes to find-



ing the right pharmaceutical solutions for our conditions. When it comes to medicine, while they provide great benefit, there is no such thing as "completely safe" medication. All medicines have risks. However, the process for drug approval around the world has been designed to reduce the risks of medications in the face of what generally are substantial benefits to the quality and length of life. The FDA approval of a drug means that at the time of approval the benefits are believed by the FDA to outweigh the known risks. Yes, drugs incorrectly prescribed or not taken correctly can end up doing more harm than good. It is not necessarily the fault of the actual medication. The responsibility rests on so many shoulders, but most importantly, now more than ever

it is YOU the patient, the consumer who must be incredibly diligent about your medication to avoid any serious injury, and receive the real benefits of good drug therapy.

Here are all the moving parts that go into action when a doctor writes a prescription for you.

Sounds Like...

First, your doctor tells you the name of the drug, and basic dosage, and scribbles on a prescription pad. You hand the prescription that looks like chicken-scratch to your pharmacist. The pharmacist fills the prescription and you go home and take the meds like a good patient. What could possibly be wrong? A lot actually.

Let's begin at the top. You are in your doctor's office probably not feeling well, maybe even a little nervous, and your listening skills are less than optimum. You think you heard the name of the medication correctly, but did you know that with the great advancements in the availability of medication that there are now hundreds of drugs with similar names that do very different things? Here are a few examples: Prilosec and



Prozac; Flonase, Flomax and Flovent; and how about Celebrx and Cerebyx. It is actually pretty easy to mishear something, and certainly deciphering the doctors handwriting is often even more difficult.

Pharmacist's with Prescription Overload

Now you bring your prescription to the pharmacist. This pharmacist is working harder than ever because the number of prescriptions written in the past decade has nearly doubled. Every detail needs to be perfect, but your pharmacist has more phones ringing and insurance companies that are constantly changing coverage policies, while at the same time managed care requirements have further increased the work load on pharmacists who already feel overwhelmed. Your pharmacist has gone through years of training before he or she can earn a license but all of these additional distractions create

an environment that is ripe for human errors in the dispensing of meds.

Patients Not Doing as Directed

Next, you go home to take the meds as directed. But do you really? According to the World Health Organization, noncompliance rates for long-term therapies average 50%. Not good.

But I am here to tell you that you don't need to be one of the scary statistics like this one. According to the FDA, medication errors cause at least one death every day and injure approximately 1.3 million people annually in the United States. Are you with me? Good. Here we go: 5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag: Medication Mishaps - Patients Beware.



Having the right pharmacy is almost as important as having the right doctor. Once you find a pharmacy you really like - stay put. Here are some of the things you should consider when choosing your pharmacy:

Get Acquainted: Drive-through and drop-off are convenient, but make it a point to get out of your car, and have some one-on-one time with your pharmacist and staff. Try to learn their names; in turn they will be more likely to remember yours. If you can, visit your pharmacy during off hours when your pharmacist has more time. You are only making your pharmacist job easier by being a good and responsible consumer.

Ask Questions: When asked if you have any questions for the pharmacist, don't be shy, a pharmacist is not a mind reader, and no question is too small. Even if you have been on a medication for a while check-in with your pharmacists to see if there is something new you should be made aware of.

Location: You may be making several trips to the pharmacy so the location should be convenient. You don't want the location of your pharmacy to be a deterrent to picking up your meds in a timely manner.

One stop shopping: Make sure your pharmacists can fill all of your prescriptions for everyone for whom you are responsible. One of the best ways to increase accuracy is to have the history of all your medications in one pharmacy location. A pharmacist will be able to see if there are any potential drug interactions or adverse reactions that may not have been noted by your doctor.

Special Services: Some pharmacies offer special services that can make your life and your health all that much better. Services like express payment options, home delivery, blood sugar testing, or the ability to download the readings from a diabetes monitor. One of the favorite services that I have found useful is automatic reminders. My pharmacy gives me a call to remind me when I will need a refill, and asks if I would like the order filled. And especially important for our busy and aging population is the ability to have your medications delivered.

Takes your insurance: Most pharmacies

can process your medication and charge only your insurance co-payment at time of purchase.

Here's a great tool to know about. Consumers can sign up for customized alerts about medications they take and report problems they encounter with medications at: <http://www.consumermedsafety.org/tools-and-resources/medication-safety-tools-and-resources/know-your-medicine/get-free-personalized-drug-updates>



When asked if you have any questions for the pharmacist, dont be shy, a pharmacist is not a mind reader, and no question is too small

When you go to your doctor you should always be prepared to report important information. You should always have a complete list of medications you are currently taking. This includes prescription and all over the counter supplements as well as vitamins, diet aids and herbs. Also, on this list note any allergies of which you are aware. I have found two sites that have a good method for creating a complete list of your meds.

www.safemedication.com/safemed/MyMedicineList/MyMedicinelist_1.aspx

OR

www.bindependent.com/hompg/look/rxchecklist.htm

In addition to your complete list of medications also have a complete family medical history. For information on how to create a family medical health history you can



check out my eBook, *5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag: Your Medical History, Use Your Power*. Looking at this family health tree may give helpful information in prescribing a useful medication.

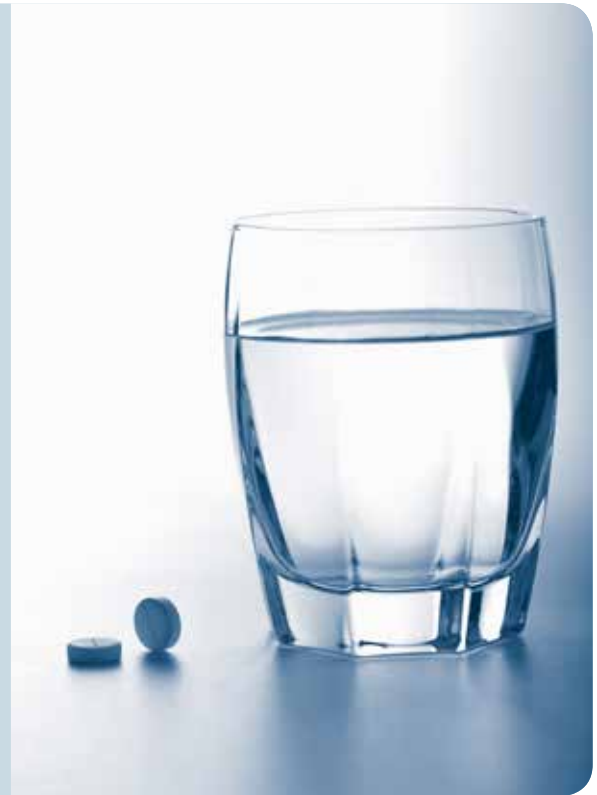
You should also have an accurate picture of your symptoms, when they began appearing and for how long. Once you have started the medication make sure you keep an accurate account of your progress, and any changes in your condition. Side effects that seem insignificant to you can be very telling to your doctor.



You should always have a list of medications you are currently taking



Research by the New England Healthcare Institute shows that patients who don't take their medications as prescribed cost the U.S. health care system an estimated \$290 billion in avoidable medical spending each year.



Once a medication is prescribed you should have a lot of questions, but let's face it many of us sense our doctors are in a rush, and we are worried about being a bother with our questions. Well, consider this statistic: In 2006 The Research by the New England Healthcare Institute shows that patients who don't take their medications as prescribed cost the U.S. health care system an estimated \$290 billion in avoidable medical spending each year. So asking your doctor for a little clarity is well worth everyone's time. Here are some good questions to ask:

- What is the name of the drug and can you please spell it to make sure I heard correctly?
- What dosage are you prescribing?
- Why do I need the drug?
- How and when do I take the drug?
- What might happen if I don't take the drug as prescribed?
- What are the possible side effects?
- When should I start feeling better?
- What should I do if I don't think the medication is working?
- What should I do if I can't tolerate the side effects?



Once you receive the medication take some time to read the label and any accompanying information provided by your pharmacist. This also applies to over the counter (OTC) drugs. The FDA requires that almost all OTC drugs also have standardized "drug facts labels". Don't let the small print intimidate you; this is one more important step in making sure you have the medication prescribed by your doctor and you know how to use it.

Special Note to Parents:

A recent Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) study found that parents give their kids the wrong dose of medicine half of the time because the dosing instructions can be confusing. Caregivers this is even more of a reason to check in with your pharmacist and pediatrician before you need to administer medication to a child.

The Wall Street Journal reported that about 50% of Americans fail to fill about 20 to 30% of their prescriptions and then don't follow the directions from their doctors. So it seems quite a few of us would be guilty of playing fast and loose with our meds including one fairly famous patient. After having open heart surgery, former President Bill Clinton admitted to having stopped taking his cholesterol medication after he saw levels come down. President Clinton was fortunate. Other patients who stop taking their cholesterol medication or do not adhere to prescribed dosages are not so lucky. Research shows that patients and caregivers make the most mistakes with medication with which they feel the most comfortable. Other common ways people play doctor are:

- Taking more or less of the medication than prescribed
- Stop taking medication because you think it's not working
- Stop taking the medication because you feel better
- Never filling the prescription

Source: <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=51198>

Yes, medication is a science, but prescribing it can be an art form. Doses may need to be changed, different methods of administering or an entirely new drug may be needed. Let your doctor be the doctor. Your job is to be a good patient. Following your doctor's orders is the best way to get both of your jobs done.



Americans fail to fill about 20% to 30% of prescriptions written by doctors, don't take drugs as directed, and don't refill medications when they run out.



To get maximum benefit from your medications, it is important to take them exactly as prescribed by your doctor. In fact, your chance of a better health outcome improves when you take your meds as directed.

Poor medication adherence can cost an extra \$2,000 a year for each patient in extra doctors visits alone, and it's associated with as many as 40% of nursing home admissions which is even more costly.

One out ten Americans takes five prescription medications a month, and that doesn't include over the counter medica-

tions, vitamins or supplements. If you are on more than one medication or are managing medication for someone else you know it can be a daunting task keeping everything organized. What patients and doctors are learning is that the easier it is to take the medication the more likely we are to follow through with instructions. The key to ease is getting and staying organized with your medical routine.



Here are some tools to get you organized...

- Get a daily, weekly or even monthly pill organizer. Whether you are taking one pill or many, organizing your pills by day and times of day can be one of the best ways to stick to your medication regimen.
- Choose a pill organizer that fits your lifestyle. Discuss your needs with your pharmacist. He or she may have something in store, or perhaps can direct you to one of the many online sites that offer a wide variety of pill cases that can address your specific situation. There are organizers for patients who travel a lot, dispensers especially for visually and physically impaired consumers, and even pill organizers that are equipped with timers to dispense your meds at a chosen hour of the day.
- Use technology. Your pharmacist can also direct you to alarm devices, or even iPhone apps that can be used to alert you to take your meds on time.
- Chart it out. Even if you have all these nifty alarms and dispensers you will still want to make a visual chart of your meds that includes an area for special notes, like including any dietary restrictions that accompany your particular drug. A dry erase white board is one popular method for making a personalized chart.
- If your medication is a liquid always make sure you use the dosage spoon that came with the medication. Too many people wrongly assume they can still use a kitchen spoon and get close enough to the correct amount.
- Never take your medication in the dark. Turn on the lights and check that you are taking the right pill.
- Never take or administer medication when you are in a rush. Parents especially have to be careful when administering meds to a child in the midst of a busy household.
- Most meds say to store in a cool, dry place, yet many of us still use the bathroom cabinet to store our meds
- Move your meds from your steamy bathroom to a proper location. A kitchen cupboard is an appropriate location when it is away from the stove, sink or any heat or moisture releasing appliances.
- Always make sure that all your medication is out of the reach of children.
- If needed, ask for non-childproof pill containers. Let's face it, sometimes the childproof pill bottles also become adult-proof, especially if you have a condition like arthritis. You can request a non-childproof container but it will be your responsibility to store this medication safely. You may not have children presently in your home but you may have small curious visitors from time to time.

Experts recommend a medication check-up once a year to review all of your medications. There are so many factors that can change over the course of the year such as, weight, hormones, and blood pressure that can influence your medication. So even if you are feeling great check-in with your doctor and make sure you come prepared with your medication history that we learned about in Prescription # 2: Be a reporter.

Next time you're getting ready to take your medication, stop and take a real look. Maybe you are holding a little white tablet, less than a millimeter in circumference, or perhaps it is a blue oblong pill, or a half teaspoon of a liquid. It looks so small and unassuming at first glance, but each of these medications represents major scientific breakthroughs. Whether you are taking a drug to ease a pain, fight an infection, control your blood pressure, or even stave off cancer, you are the recipient of years of research, and the work of hundreds of men and women who have put their talents together all in the hopes of discovering and developing a medication that will make your life better. So go ahead -- take a look at that pill. Besides making you feel better it should also inspire a little bit of awe.

I hope the information in this eBook will help you get the most out of your medication, steer clear of the mishaps, and keep you on the road to the best of health.



Use technology. Your pharmacist can also direct you to alarm devices or even iPhone apps that can be used to alert you to take your meds on time.



Dear Readers,

Thank you so much for reading *5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag: Medication Mishaps, Patients Beware*. This eBook was born from my own personal experience of being engulfed in a healthcare situation that turned my world upside-down. After I regained my health, I made a promise to myself to “use my hard-earned knowledge to help others in disruptive healthcare situations”.

And that is why I have made this eBook so easy to share. Whether you are seeking care for yourself or a loved one, finding support is just a click away. Just go to my website www.MyrtlePotter.com and click on the eBook cover. It's that simple.

I also hope while at my website, you will find lots of other useful tools and information to help you successfully navigate the healthcare system. You'll find a whole team of people who want to help you through just about any healthcare situation. There are videos, podcasts, lots of useful articles and resources.

Most importantly, we want to hear from you – how you're doing and what we can do to help. So please keep in touch. I want to be your trusted guide as you navigate the healthcare system.

Best Wishes for the Best Health,

Myrtle Potter

Your Trusted Voice in Healthcare

Please visit me at www.MyrtlePotter.com



About Myrtle

Myrrtle Potter is one of America's foremost and most accomplished healthcare leaders and innovators. She has dedicated three decades to serving the needs of millions of consumers through her leadership of some of America's most successful global healthcare companies. Myrtle is on the boards of Medco Health Solutions, Inc., and Everyday Health Inc. Myrtle's vast experience has earned her the reputation as *Your Trusted Voice in Healthcare*™.

The dynamic intersection of Myrtle's knowledge of the healthcare industry and her own near-death health scare culminated in the creation of Myrtle Potter Media, a company that provides guidance, tools and resources to millions of Americans to help them navigate the U.S. healthcare system.

Myrtle is seen on Accent Health Television, which is broadcast in over 30,000 physician offices nationwide and viewed by 153 million consumers each year. She is also a featured business commentator on CNBC and can be found on EverydayHealth.com and www.MyrtlePotter.com.

Myrtle previously held executive-level positions at Genentech, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Merck, and served on the board of Amazon.com for five years. She was three times named one of the "Top 50 Most Powerful Women in Business" by *Fortune* magazine. Myrtle is a graduate of the University of Chicago and the co-author of *Living Proof* (2011), which can be purchased on her website at www.MyrtlePotter.com.



5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag: Patients Beware

Copyright © 2011 by Myrtle Potter, Inc. All rights reserved. You have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this eBook on screen.

About the Publisher

United States

Myrtle Potter Media, Inc. eBooks

1275 Lincoln Avenue, Suite 7

San Jose, California 95125

www.MyrtlePotter.com