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MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

As pharmaceutical technology increases, doctors have a wider range of tools to target and manage symptoms that arise in our patients. Each year brings exciting new advances that give physicians more options for treatment. Many medications, especially in my field of cardiology, are ones that require strict routine and precise dosage. Medication management is one crucial example of how patients and physicians must work together for optimal results.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS:

Keep to the prescribed routine

The more you incorporate taking medication into your daily rituals the better; for example, if you become accustomed to the habit of taking your medication with your breakfast in the morning, then you'll be less likely to miss a dose. With some medications, like antibiotics, that are prescribed short-term, many people mistakenly think they should stop taking them if they feel better. Never stop taking a medication full-stop without speaking first to your physician. Some can have dangerous side effects if just abandoned.

Use medications boxes

Yes, these have a bit of an old-school feel to them, but we are creatures of habit, and we're only human. Give yourself the best possible chance to improve and thrive with you medication. Medication boxes can be found at any pharmacy, and are divided by weeks and days to track and manage dosage. This can be enormously helpful in these hectic times when it may slip your mind if and when you took a pill. Some people end up taking more than prescribed; some end up skipping a dose. In some cases this can be tricky and dangerous. My best advice for anyone who takes medication (especially multiple medications and/or multiple doses during the day) is to purchase a med box and take the hassle out of trying to keep track of it all alone.

Keep a written log

I cannot stress this aspect of medical management enough. As a cardiologist, I see many people on various medications, often prescribed by not only their primary care physician, but also a multitude of other specialists. This can become confusing for both patients and doctors, so it's enormously helpful if you share with all your doctors what medications you are taking, INCLUDING over-the-counter medication and nutraceuticals and vitamins. Sometimes there are contraindications or issues that stem from these and physicians need as much information as possible about the medical landscape to help you. Also, keep track of changes in mood, rashes, hives - any kind of side effect or change in your body since taking your medication. Your doctor may prescribe a different dosage or alternative treatment.

Special note to caregivers

As a parent of a child with special needs, I can tell you that medical management for those we care for is crucial. Anyone who cares for an elderly family member, a child or other loved one who needs assistance with their medications, please take care to stay vigilant about tracking their medications. As a physician, it's always enormously helpful to be able to speak with caregivers about how the medications are being tolerated or what changes have transpired, in order to best treat the patient.

Special note to travelers

Make sure to call ahead to your pharmacy or doctor's office for refills before traveling, especially if you are traveling out of the country. Some medications can't be prescribed in other states or other countries. Heart medications, anti-seizure medications and insulin are a few examples of medications that should not be skipped. Please be sure to stick to the routine, even if you're enjoying exploring a new city.

Our lives are meant to be uniquely lived, and lived to the fullest; medication is meant to enhance our quality of life by resolving and relieving symptoms of illness. With that in mind, give yourself the best possible opportunity to enjoy your loved ones and your health, no matter what circumstances come your way. Your health is your most precious gift: protect and cherish your body the best you can.

Listen to Dr. Galichia's Radio Show – "Take Your Health to Heart" every Saturday from 11 AM to Noon on 1480 KQAM in Wichita. If you have any medically related questions, please call us during the LIVE broadcast at 1-800-TALK-997 or 1-800-825-5997. You can also e-mail your questions anytime to

GalichiaRadio@Galichia.com. We would love to hear from you!!!

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