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Medication Management

Last week the Texas Extension Education Association Crafty Ladies and Piecemakers Clubs held a meeting to highlight the programs they attended at their State Convention last Fall. Mildred Robbins gave an informative segment on the Earth Kind Environmental Stewardship Program. Earth Kind uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum gardening and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting our environment.

Carrol Houllis followed with a program on Medication Management. Her presentation gave many practical and useful tips on dealing with medication on a daily basis. This information was compiled by Andrew B. Crocker, Extension Program Specialist – Gerontology Health, Texas AgriLife Extension Service. I would like to share some of her presentation with you because it is information we all need to know and practice.

While many people take medications, people over 65 make up 12% of the population in the United States, but take 30% of the prescription drugs. On average, a person over the age of 65 takes 4-5 prescriptions and 2 over-the-counter medicines. As we age, we process medications differently because increased body fat and decreased muscle mass may affect how medications are processed.

Many herbal and dietary supplements claim to make you feel better and/or lose weight. However, it is important to know they are not regulated by the government in the same way that medications are, they do not go through trials like other medications, and they may have a serious impact on other medications being taken. Always consult with your doctor if you choose to take a vitamin, mineral, and/or supplement.

Taking more than one medication is called polypharmacy. Combinations of medications may cause a wide variety of problems. Talk with all your doctors regarding all your medications, vitamins, minerals, supplements, etc. If you have several doctors, make sure they all know what the others are prescribing. Put all your medicines in a bag and take them to your appointments. One club member had a great idea; she reached into her purse and pulled out the tags that the pharmacist attaches to the outside of your sack. She had them all stapled together, so she could show them to her doctor or in the event of an emergency trip to the hospital they could be readily found by her family. I thought this was an awesome idea! Those little tags include the name of the medicine, dosage amounts, intervals of intake, and the doctor's name.

Another factor to keep in mind when there are multiple people in the family taking medication is keeping everyone's separate. You don't want to accidentally take someone else's medicine. If you use a pill sorter, make sure every family member's is a different color. Other ideas are to use

rubber bands, tape, colored dots or put your initials on the bottle cap. Whatever way helps you best is the method I would use.

There are many things to keep in mind when dealing with prescriptions. While they are designed to keep you healthy, if not taken properly with the right precautions, they might not help you at all. They could even be harmful. So remember to keep a list of all medications and discuss them with your doctor, keep track of the side-effects and report them to your doctor, take medications as prescribed, do not share medications with others, store and sort your medications the right way.

If you need further information on either of these presentations, please call the Texas AgriLife Extension Service office at 903/473-5000, ext 157 and we will be glad to give you copies of this information.

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