

COVID-19-Problems when patients share medication

Sharing medications may be done with the best intentions BUT don't!

It is understandable at the present time why people would want to share medicines with neighbours and friends or buy medicines from online websites, especially when so many people are self-isolating and unable to get their own medicines.

As a result of the recent high demand for over-the-counter medicines, many have been temporarily out of stock. It may be tempting to share over-the-counter and prescription medications with friends or family members or buy medicines online, but most people don't realise how quickly things can go wrong. Buying prescription-only medicines online also has the risk that the medicine you receive may be fake and potentially very harmful.

❖ You may not be treating the right problem

In fact, in some cases the symptoms may not require medicine at all. Or the symptoms may be similar to someone else's but the cause may be completely different which could mean the medicine won't work or could cause more harm than good.

❖ The dose may be incorrect

The correct dosage is critical to ensuring that medications are both safe and effective. If a medication is shared, you may be starting at a higher dose than is actually needed, increasing the risk of side effects and problems. It is worth remembering that even medications like topical ointments and creams can cause problems if used in the wrong way and by the wrong person.

❖ Sharing antibiotics is bad for everyone

The use of antibiotics when they are not needed is a problem for the individual but also for society as a whole. Overuse leads to antibiotic resistance and this will mean that we could run out of effective treatments for common infections. Ultimately this will mean that many of the treatments we know today cannot be used and that would mean cancer treatments and hip replacements would be too risky to undertake.

❖ Pain medication should always be managed carefully

Pain medications can be the most dangerous medicines to share. Many can increase blood pressure and some may cause renal failure or heart failure as well as stomach ulcers. So, if you have a pre-existing condition, using pain killers without medical advice can lead to serious problems.

Don't share medicines

Check with your pharmacist or doctor if you have an illness BEFORE taking any medication, and NEVER share prescription medications with your friends and family.