



March 2nd, 2015

March is Pharmacist Awareness Month – Take the Right Drug the Right Way

There are almost 39,000 licensed pharmacists practicing in Canada and March is the month that we celebrate them and their profession.

Statins – Can Be Heartening

They get a bad rap – everything from their cost to their side effects to questions of their necessity – but a recent 20-year follow-up study has demonstrated that at only 5 years of treatment with a statin resulted in a persistent reduction in cardiovascular disease over the 2 decades of the study. Essentially, taking the statin was like setting the clock back 5 years on your cardiovascular system. Numbers like these are very “heartening!”

Take Your Vitamin K Every Day

Vitamin K is not typically taken as a supplement – nor is it typically recommended. Daily requirements are around 100 mcg – just half a cup of broccoli provides over 200! It tends to be found in dark leafy green, and some fruits and cooking oils. It plays a role in blood clotting and taking supplements can be dangerous to anyone on blood thinners. These people should also try to keep their day-to-day dietary intake relatively consistent.

Take Acetaminophen Wisely

Many people assume a drug is “safe” if it’s available without a prescription – acetaminophen (Tylenol©) is considered more so, due to its use in infants and children. However, there have been at least 156 “accidental” deaths blamed on acetaminophen in Canada since 2006! Overdosing, often due to combining several medications that already contain acetaminophen, is a major cause, as is its use in liver disease, drinkers, the malnourished, and very young or old.

Practice Your Technique

Getting the right drug is one issue, but getting that right drug into your body the best way can be quite another! Many medications need to be delivered by special means, such as an asthma inhaler or an injector device. A recent study suggested that only 7% of patients used their inhaler properly while only 16% did so with their autoinjector – in spite of having been shown how! Repetition and practice is necessary to perfect techniques!

Part of your pharmacist’s job is to train users of these specialized devices and they are more than happy to review and improve your techniques at refill visits. Be sure to take a moment to learn what you can. It could be life-saving!