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Take Your Medicine – The Correct Way!

Statin Drugs Have Benefit Beyond Reducing Cholesterol

Most have heard of statin drugs and their potent effects in reducing cholesterol, but new research is showing that they offer additional benefits – specifically, they reduce cancer risk! Statin use was associated with a 22% reduction in various cancer death in women and 55% for bone/connective tissue cancers. In men, statin use lowered prostate cancer mortality by up to 40%. It is thought to be due to the interference of statins on cell growth. Fascinating!

If You Don't Take It – Your Medication Can't Work!

The best drugs in the world won't work if the patient doesn't take them as prescribed – or skips them altogether! A Dutch analysis has found that up to 80% of patients do not take their statin medication! While the protocol for the analysis did have its drawbacks (for example, it relied on patient recall and reporting), it does offer some sense of the scope of non-adherence and indicate a significant challenge for health care providers.

Some Drugs Take Time to Work

Anti-depressants are a category of medications with traditionally poor adherence rates – approximately 20% of patients stop taking their anti-depressant without telling their physician. It is particularly important with these medications as it can take weeks for their benefits to appear, but, in the meantime, there can be an uncomfortable period of adjustment. Understanding this and being a patient patient can vastly improve health outcomes in this case.

Understand Your Child's Medication

A Canadian study has shown that 1 out of every 12 pediatric emergency room visits is related to medications – and 65% of these were preventable! The most common reasons were adverse drug effects, inadequate dosing (thus, ER visit due to unresolved medical problem) and poor adherence (not taking the drug as prescribed). Interesting that overdoses were not a major issue! This points to the need for improved prescribing practices, communication and monitoring.

Medication adherence – the process of taking a drug optimally – is a significant issue in health care. Your pharmacist is concerned about making sure you get the most out of your medication. Listen to their advice and ask your questions!