

# Wherever You Keep Your Medicines...Keep Them Ready

(NAPSA)—Sixty percent of American medicine cabinets are likely to contain expired or nearly empty over-the-counter or prescription medications, according to survey results posted on [www.mymedcab.com](http://www.mymedcab.com). The results support experts' advice that consumers incorporate a "checkup" of their medicine cabinets into their seasonal routine. This "checkup" will ensure it is equipped to handle family members' potential illnesses and ailments.

More than half of Americans surveyed (54 percent) said they check their medicine cabinet for expired medications only every few months or longer. Even fewer check other places where medicines are stored, including kitchens or refrigerators, travel bags, bedrooms, purses or briefcases or workplace desk drawers.

"People should make a medicine cabinet checkup part of their seasonal rituals, just like changing smoke alarm batteries," said Dr. Robert Piepho, Ph.D., FCP, and dean of the school of pharmacy at the University of Missouri at Kansas City. "And that checkup should include *everywhere* medicines are stored."

"It's really important for people to examine all of their medicines in cabinets, desk drawers or wherever they keep them—to ensure that they are familiar with their medications, that all medications are up-to-date and properly stored," Piepho said. "It's also a good time to make sure that they are equipped with essential products for when they need them."

The [mymedcab.com](http://mymedcab.com) survey confirmed that most Americans are "drugstore dashers," waiting until symptoms strike to stock their medicine cabinets with essentials. Fifty six percent of those surveyed said they run out to get medicines as they need them. Only 28 percent said they methodically stock up so they're prepared.



## Check Up Check List

To assist consumers with improving the health of their home medicine cabinets—[www.mymedcab.com](http://www.mymedcab.com), sponsored by McNeil Consumer & Specialty Pharmaceuticals, the makers of Tylenol and Johnson & Johnson\*Merck Consumer Pharmaceuticals, suggests they follow "the three R's":

- **READ** the labels and expiration dates and check dosage instructions before administering any medications—following directions is crucial in ensuring accurate administration and effectiveness;

- **REMOVE** all items that are beyond their expiration dates and those that are no longer used—expired medications may lose their potency after time;

- **RESTOCK** expired medications and other essential items—as a way to meet the individual health needs of everyone in the home.

"Medicine cabinet checkup time is also a good time to ensure medications are properly stored," said Piepho. "The best place for most medications is in a dry place away from sunlight. Bathrooms are often too damp and humid, which can break down, degrade, or decrease the potency of medicines."

Medications should always be kept in their original packaging so that consumers can easily see the expiration date, follow the dosage instructions, and read the warnings on the back of the bottle or

package. Refilling travel-size bottles or combining medications in one container can mean losing important information. It is equally important to talk to a doctor or pharmacist about any possible drug interactions between two or more medicines that might be taken at the same time.

## Medicine Cabinet Preparation

When preparing for the cold and flu season, experts suggest stocking your medicine cabinet with medications from the following categories:

- pain relief (acetaminophen and ibuprofen)
- allergy and sinus relief (antihistamine and nasal decongestant)
- digestive health (anti-diarrheal, anti-gas, antacid, and acid reducer)
- nighttime products (sleep aids).

For consumers who have children, it is important to have the appropriate strength of children's medicine.

For more information about medicine cabinet essentials, visit [www.mymedcab.com](http://www.mymedcab.com) or talk to your pharmacist.

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*A total of 1,025 telephone interviews were conducted with adults 18 years of age and older via the ORC International weekly telephone omnibus during the weekend of April 3-6, 2003. The results are weighted to reflect the actual distribution of adult population with regard to age, gender, race, and geographic distribution. The margin of error is +/-3 percentage points.*