



Tips from the German Coalition for Patient Safety on how to handle medicinal products at home

A medicine cabinet storing all medicines used by family members in a household is very common in Germany. As it contains long-term medication as well as prn-medicines, certain medicines are often stored for a relatively long period of time. Consequently, the correct storage conditions are decisive for maintaining the medicines' effectiveness.

The following 10 points demonstrate important, generally applicable aspects that you should bear in mind when storing and using your medicines. If you are uncertain, or have questions about a specific medicine, please get in touch with your pharmacist or physician.

1. As far as possible, try to keep all of your medicines together – in a dry place, out of the reach of children and at a normal temperature (optimally below 25°C). Avoid damp rooms (e.g. bathrooms), as well as direct warmth (e.g. radiators) or sunlight (windowsills). Pay attention to exceptions such as drugs that need to be refrigerated. Your pharmacist will be able to tell you if such exceptions apply to your medicines.
2. Store your medicines in a way to avoid endangering other people (e.g. children).
3. Keep your medicines in the original package along with the package leaflet. Should you lose the latter, ask for a replacement at your pharmacy.
4. Only use medicines that are meant for you. Correspondingly, do not pass on your own medicines to someone else.
5. Make sure you have an up-to-date medicine schedule for any medicines that you take regularly.
6. If medicines are used by more than one person in your household, make sure to place a note on each package saying for whom the medicine is intended.
7. Certain medicines, for example eye-drops, solutions and juices, have a limited shelf life once the primary packaging was opened or they were used for the first time. Check your packaging leaflet or ask your pharmacist if any such shelf life reductions apply to your medicines. After opening a medicine with a limited shelf-life, note the date of opening on the package.
8. Sometimes, tablets have to be split before being administered. If so, let your pharmacy show you the right way to do it. However, not all tablets are made to be split (sometimes the scoring is simply for decorative purposes!). Generally, the fewer tablets are split, the better! Discuss the possibilities with your doctor or pharmacist. If half tablets remain after preparing your medicines, throw them away. Do not store them loose in the package.
9. Pill organisers or dosette boxes are suitable for preparing a weekly supply. Your pharmacist will be able to tell you which medicines are not suitable for this procedure (e.g. because of light sensitivity).
10. Dispose of medicinal products that have expired or that you no longer use properly (also check www.arzneimittelsorgung.de). Toilets or drains are not appropriate places for disposing of medicines!

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