Top stories in this newsletter

Medicine Cabinet Clean Out

It’s a new year and time to make some healthy resolutions – including keeping a safe and clean medicine cabinet! More than likely you have some old prescription bottles or over-the-counter medications that you’ve been saving “just in case” it was needed. In reality, those medications may have expired and may cause more harm than good. Leaving expired and unused drugs in your cabinet can put anyone in your home – even children and pets – at risk for accidental ingestion, misuse or overdose. Here are some tips to take action.

- Once a year, go through your medicine cabinet and check the dates on everything and discard any items that have expired.
- For prescription medications, discard those that are more than one year old.
- Any items that have changed color, smell or taste should be discarded as well.
- If something is no longer in its original container and cannot be identified, get rid of it. It’s best to keep all medications in their original containers for easy recognition.
- Be careful when throwing away medication. You can place medication in a sealable bag and add kitty litter, coffee grounds, or any material that mixes well and makes it unappealing for children or animals to eat. Seal the bag and put it in the trash. Your local pharmacy may also be able to assist in disposing of medication in a safe way.
- Consider relocating your medicine cabinet, as the bathroom isn’t the best place to store medication. Temperature and humidity changes while the shower is running can lower the potency of your medication. Medications should be kept in a cool dry place, away from children.

Winterize your body

“Traditional Chinese medicine teaches us to live in harmony with the seasons to protect our health,” said Dr. Aaron Michelfelder, a family medicine and integrative medicine physician at Loyola University Health System. “Making certain adjustments to our diet, sleep regimen and lifestyle will make us more in sync with nature and better equipped to cope with the plunging temperatures.”

You can follow Eastern medicine to “winterize” your body and protect your health this season:

- **Eat warming herbs and foods.** Warming herbs and foods include cinnamon, ginger, garlic, spicy foods, sweet potatoes, squash, meat, and nutrient-dense soups and stews. Save raw, leafy greens for the summer.
- **Eat less.** We typically are not as active during the winter so we require less food. Cut down on your caloric intake.
- **Sleep more.** Traditional Chinese medicine recommends following the sun and sleeping more in the fall and winter because we have fewer hours of daylight. It is best to get 9 to 10 hours of sleep as opposed to the recommended 8 hours in the summer and spring.

If you’re driving, drive. Don’t text. Keep your eyes on the road, and now one study says don’t even talk to your voice-activated smartphone or dashboard infotainment system. Hands-free is still loaded with distraction and requires more attention from drivers than less, says the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety and the University of Utah. Say good-bye, Siri.

The CMU Health Care Committee meets monthly and collaborates with the university by providing suggestions, input and feedback about various initiatives pertaining to benefits and wellness. It is not a decision-making body; instead, members act as liaisons for their respective employee groups. Click here for contact information.