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# Age Spots - Tis the Season to be Alert

NOVEMBER 07TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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## Tis the Season, to be Alert

The Holidays are coming and I for one am very excited about it. I love to cook and bake and watch football and just spend quality time with my family. Luckily for me this year I will have help in the kitchen; my twins are 10 and have already started asking to help bake different things. Other than the mess, we have had great success. Two batches of yeast rolls, some cinnamon rolls and several kinds of cookies, all from scratch. I know who is in charge of desserts at my house this year.

With so many people coming in and out of our homes over the Holidays there is a topic that needs discussion. That topic is drug diversion. Simply put, drug diversion is taking prescription drugs from pharmacies and other legal sources and moving them into the illegal market. Then, the drugs are illegally sold.

Drug diversion matters because it can cost all of us who pay into and use Medicare and Medicaid, and even private insurance. According to the Pharmacy Times, the estimated cost of controlled prescription drug diversion and abuse to both public and private medical insurers is approximately \$72.5 billion a year. That is a lot of money. And the cost is not just in dollars, but also in productivity and lives.

Many people think prescription drugs are safer than illegal drugs – but they are safe ONLY when they are taken exactly as prescribed. Annually, more than a million people end up in the emergency room for taking prescription drugs incorrectly. More than 40 people die daily from the misuse of prescription painkillers. That's more than

the number of people dying from using heroin and cocaine combined.

It's against the law to divert drugs—you can go to jail for it. But, it happens.

Drug diversion can happen when someone goes to more than one doctor to get the same prescription too often. It also can happen when someone steals, or when someone buys medications from other people. It can also happen when someone illegally signs or changes a prescription.

There are some ways that you can prevent drug diversion:

Use drugs as prescribed by your doctor.

Count your medicine before you leave the pharmacy.

Safeguard all your prescriptions and prescription medications, there are medicine lock boxes to secure your prescriptions.

When your doctor changes your prescriptions, make sure that you safely get rid of unused portions. Ask your pharmacist about how to do that. Some Police and Sheriff Offices have a drop box to put old prescriptions in.

Report suspected drug diversion and other Medicare fraud or abuse to the Missouri Senior Medicare Patrol at (888)515-6565. SMPs are funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging.

Be on the alert and know where your medicine is and who has access to it. Sharing many things around the Holidays is a great idea, but sharing medicine is never a good thing. If you have recipes for a couple of 10 year olds, you can share those. Enjoy all the wonderful food, football and family and stay safe this Holiday Season!

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