

Identifying Oral Medications

This question was recently asked: *"My husband and I have many prescriptions to take, some for chronic conditions, some to use when needed. We are finding pills in containers that are not the original ones from the pharmacy, like in a traveling pill container. We are on a tight budget and cannot afford to throw away and replace those pills we cannot identify. Do you have any tips?"*

The price of prescriptions can be prohibitive, and I understand the concern about throwing good pills away then paying hard earned money to have them filled. However, safety should always be your first concern. Identifying a pill is one thing, knowing how old it is is another. Expired medications are ineffective at best, hazardous at worst.

Here are some things to consider in this process:

1. Take the pills you cannot identify to your regular pharmacist or doctor. Based on your prescription history, he/she will be able to recognize and name them.
2. Contact your insurance to get an itemized list of the prescriptions you have purchased recently. This might help you, your doctor or your pharmacist determine the expiration date of your supply.
3. Use specialized websites:

The National institute of Health website allows you to upload an image of your medication for identification:

<http://pillbox.nlm.nih.gov/index.html>

Others rely on your description:

http://www.drugs.com/pill_identification.html

<http://www.webmd.com/pill-identification/default.htm>

4. Use an app

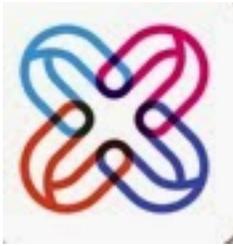
There are many apps, for Android and iTunes, with pill ID features. These are free:



iPharmacy



epocrates



drugs.com

In conclusion:

Use caution:

Be absolutely certain the medications have not expired or were never subjected to conditions which may have affected them negatively. (i.e. lack of refrigeration, exposure to light or humidity) before using them. When in doubt, consult your healthcare specialist, pharmacist or other medical professional before using any medication, over the counter or prescription.

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