

Healthy Living

Information from the American Chiropractic Association & Dr. Joel Fugleberg

Treat All Pills With Care

Americans are accustomed to taking pills for what ails them. Many health practitioners are concerned that we take too many pills—over-the-counter and prescription. But apart from the question of whether we over-medicate ourselves is the issue of safety. Studies are showing that what we do to protect our pills is enormously important. Pills should be kept neither too hot nor too cold. Even bathroom humidity can destroy the usefulness of medications or supplements. When pills stick together, it's a sign: They've been exposed to too much humidity. Pills can lose their effectiveness or even become dangerous under conditions that most of us do not think about.

A recent *New York Times* article that outlined the many ways we thoughtlessly treat our pills stated, "For patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes or heart disease, a damaged dose of a crucial medicine, like insulin or nitroglycerin, can be life-threatening."

Pills are usually the last thing we think of when packing for a trip. We put small amounts of shampoo and other odds and ends into plastic vials and a clear plastic bag that we show at the security checkpoint. But we usually toss our pills into our checked baggage. Out on the tarmac, checked bags sit on carts where pills may undergo great temperature extremes. When we take the pills out at our destination, they look the same, but they are not.

Much of the food we eat is treated with preservatives to keep it from going "bad." Pills rarely include preservatives. And what we don't realize is that antibiotics decay when they get too hot or too cold and they can also cause stomach or kidney damage. Even aspirin is capable of going bad if it is not stored properly.

Most of us do not make a single trip to the pharmacy to pick up our pills. Instead, when we take the car out, we usually do several errands—and maybe stop for lunch. If our meds or other pills sit in the car while we shop or eat on a hot or cold day, they will be negatively affected.

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Manufacturers recommend that we keep our pills at somewhere between 68 and 77 degrees, which is far cooler than the inside of a car almost anywhere in the middle of summer in this country, and far warmer than the inside of a car almost anywhere in winter.

So, for your health and wellness, please keep the following in mind:

- If you are going to pick up meds or pills at the store, or if you happen to buy even over-the-counter medicine for colds or flu, never leave such items in the car. Always keep them with you until you can put them away at home.
- Chilled medications are particularly at risk and should be transported to a refrigerated environment as quickly as possible.
- If you store any kind of drugs or medications in the bathroom, put them in a room that is temperature controlled and where humidity is not an issue.
- When you travel, keep your pills in your carry-on or in your handbag. Never put them into checked baggage.



Dr. Joel Fugleberg is a chiropractor, fitness advocate, author, and health & wellness speaker in St. Paul, MN. His mission is to empower others to take a proactive approach in their health, through the use of chiropractic and other natural strategies, to achieve optimal function and wellness. With his background, he has helped thousands reach a higher level of health in his community.

If you would like to schedule a consultation, or to have Dr. Joel speak at your organization or event, he can be reached at the contact info listed below.

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