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## **Secure Your Medications Before the Celebrations**

*Keeping prescriptions stored properly reduces risk of misuse, serious situations*

**CHATTANOOGA, Tenn.** — When preparing to host holiday gatherings, you may not immediately think to add ‘properly store medication’ to your to-do list. However, with prescription drug abuse and overdose increasing, it’s important to take appropriate measures to secure your medicines before visitors arrive.

“Many people don’t realize how common prescription drug misuse and abuse issues are,” said Kristina Clark, co-developer of the national Count It! Lock It! Drop It!™ prescription drug abuse prevention program. “There are many reasons someone might get into your medicines, and a number of negative consequences when they do.”

By keeping your medications properly locked and out of sight, you can avoid issues that could arise when a guest isn’t feeling well and checks the family medicine cabinet.

“Friends or family may seek relief for a headache or some other condition, and simply take a prescription medication they find, thinking it will help,” said Cheryl McClatchey, behavioral health director at BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. “It may not be done with bad intentions, but it can have dangerous outcomes.”

Even if someone asks you to share your pills, it’s best to refrain, says Dr. Natalie Tate, director of pharmacy at BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee.

“Don’t share medications – because they are not prescribed for anyone but you, they could cause an adverse reaction in someone else, especially if they are on other medications or have a chronic medical or behavioral health condition.”

Properly storing your medications could also prevent a tragic situation. According to a Yale School of Medicine study, the number of hospitalizations for opioid poisonings in children and adolescents nearly doubled from 1997 to 2012.

“Toddlers or children may think the drugs are candy and end up taking them, while teenagers may take them recreationally and end up overdosing,” noted Dr. Tate. “The best way to avoid an issue is to have medications, especially prescription painkillers, secured in an area not accessible to guests.”

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Count It! Lock It! Drop It!<sup>TM</sup> offers these tips to keep prescription drugs safe year-round:

- Store your medications in a secure and dry place. Invest in a home lock box.
- Count your pills regularly to check for missing medication.
- Never share your medications.
- Don't discuss your medications with others.
- Dispose of unused medications securely – go to [countitlockitdropit.org](http://countitlockitdropit.org) to find a secure drop box near you.

“By disposing of pills in this manner, you’re preventing medicine from harming someone or falling into the wrong hands,” explained Christina Merino, executive director of the Coffee County Anti-Drug Coalition, which founded and operates the Count It! Lock It! Drop It!<sup>TM</sup> program.

Learn how to avoid being an accidental drug dealer – visit [countitlockitdropit.org](http://countitlockitdropit.org), supported by the BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation.

#### **About BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation, Inc.**

The BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation, Inc. was established in December, 2003 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation organized to promote the philanthropic mission of BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. The foundation awards grants focused on high-impact initiatives across the state, which promote healthy lifestyle choices and help control health care costs for all Tennessee residents. Working with civic and economic partners, the foundation is dedicated to the support of research, innovative programs and creative approaches to improve the health and quality of life of Tennesseans for generations to come.

#### **About BlueCross®**

BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee’s mission is to provide peace of mind through better health. Founded in 1945, the Chattanooga-based company is focused on serving more than 3.4 million members in Tennessee and across the country. BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Inc. is an independent licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association. For more information, visit the company's website at [bcbst.com](http://bcbst.com).

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