

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KDHE Urges Caution with Prescription Drugs

Mixing Medications Can Be Deadly

TOPEKA, Kan. – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) urges all Kansans to protect themselves, family and friends from poisoning caused by drugs, including prescription medications. According to the *Kansas Special Emphasis Report: Drug Poisoning Deaths 1999-2014*, approximately 75 percent of drug poisoning deaths in Kansas were unintentional in 2014.

Taking too much of a prescription drug or mixing drugs, such as prescription painkillers and certain sedatives, can be dangerous. In 2014, prescription painkillers including hydrocodone and oxycodone, contributed to nearly half of all unintentional drug poisoning deaths in Kansas. According to the Kansas Tracking and Reporting of Controlled Substances (KTRACS), in 2014 more than 110,000 Kansans had overlapping prescriptions for both opiates (prescription pain medicine) and benzodiazepines (prescription sedatives).

“You can take several steps to avoid a drug poisoning,” said Brandon Skidmore, Director KDHE Bureau of Health Promotion. “Talk to your doctor if you have prescriptions for both a painkiller and a sedative. Never mix different drugs together or take more than prescribed without talking to your doctor first. Keep your medications locked up in a safe place where others cannot easily access them. Properly dispose of any unused medications. Finally, take medicine only if your doctor has prescribed it to you and do not share your medication with others.”

KDHE recently sent a representative to the 2016 National Rx Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta, Georgia. This is the largest national collaboration of professionals from local, state, and federal agencies including the Office of the President of the United States of America, several congressional leaders and others impacted by the prescription drug poisoning epidemic.

For information about medication disposal, visit www.kdheks.gov/waste/about_medwaste.html .

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KDHE's mission is to protect and improve the health and environment of all Kansans.