

Toledo Area Scleroderma and PH Newsletter



Spring 2011

Meeting Date

March 17th, 2011

Location

St. Luke's Hospital

5901 Monclova, OH

In room 2

Time: 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Open Discussion



UPCOMING MEETINGS

March 17th April 21st May 19th June 16th

July 21st August 18th September 15th

October 20th November 17th December
15th.

Toledo Area Scleroderma and PH News

Last month on February 17th we had speaker Kelly Howard from Actelion talking about care giving and caregivers. We had talked about setting up goals. Communication is a key. Asking for help and accepting. Make a list that will consider ones needs and ability. Maybe they will need help with children. Pick a right time to ask. Use the "I" statement.

Scheduling:

Express the reason for the appointments. Scheduled first thing in the morning, Or last appointment of the day that way it will give you more time with the doctor to ask questions. Bring a list to the doctor to go over it with him or her. You can also talk with the nurse if you any concerns or questions.

Become partner with you doctor and other health care team.

Splitting Pills May Have Risks

Jan. 7, 2011 -- Pill splitting, a common practice among many people who are looking to cut [medication](#) costs or dosages, is risky business, according to a study in the January issue of the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*.

Some pills can't be split 50-50 and there can be a narrow margin between a dose that can help you and one that can hurt you, the researchers report.

"Not all formulations are available for splitting, and even when they are, large dose deviation or [weight](#) losses can occur [and] this could have serious clinical consequences for medication with a narrow therapeutic-toxic range," write researchers who were led by Charlotte Verrue, PharmD, PhD, of Ghent University in Belgium.

In the study, five volunteers split eight different types of pills using a kitchen knife, scissors/hands, or a pill splitter. The participants split the pills into quarters or halves using these three methods. Of the eight types of pills, three had one score down the middle, two had two scores like a cross, and three were unscored. The medications used were for a host of

conditions, including Parkinson's disease, [arthritis](#), and [heart disease](#).

The researchers weighed the tablet and its parts before and after splitting. They found that 31% of the pill slices deviated from their recommended doses by more than 15% and 14% of the pill fragments deviated by more than 25%. Even the most accurate means of pill splitting, the pill splitter, was associated with margins of error.

"We have tested all kinds of tablets: big, small, round, with or without scoring line ... and tried to find an overall method that is best suitable for splitting tablets," says Verrue in an email to WebMD. "Dose deviation when splitting tablets is not always a problem. For example, for chronic therapies (e.g. [hypertension](#), etc.) it often doesn't matter when a patient takes a little more of a drug one day and a little less the next day. It becomes problematic when we are talking about bigger dose deviations and drugs that have a narrow therapeutic index (i.e. when a small difference in dosage can have a big difference in effect)."

If you must split your pills, use a splitting device, the researchers conclude.

To Split or Not to Split?

Jeffrey Brewer, PharmD, an associate professor at Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in New York, says that pill splitting is a widespread practice in the U.S. among people who are trying to get an intermediate dose or to keep their health care costs down.

“The new study puts the downsides of pill splitting into a very specific light,” he says.

In some cases, pill splitting may be a person’s only option due to financial constraints. For example, a 90-day supply could last for six months if the pills are A half or a quarter of a pill may be better than nothing, but this varies based on the type of medication and its dosing formulation.

“Different tablets split differently,” he says. “Some crumble, others are hard and cut very clean. Some tablets are coated, others are long acting or short acting, and some are capsules or extended release,” he says. “Others are scored down the middle and can be broken with your thumbs, and a lot don't have any scores at all.”

There is no clear-cut consensus on which

pills you can, or can't, split, he says.

"It would be unsafe to say 'yes you could do this with three out of five of your pills or all of your medications,'" he says. "You need to evaluate how well your disease is controlled, why you are splitting, and what tablets you want to split."

Pills are split all the time, and some insurers even offer incentives to get their members to cut their pills, says Alan M. Weiss, MD, an internal medicine doctor at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. "It can be a great cost-saving mechanism for patients who can do it and do it on the right pills."

"There are some pills where you can break the seal if you cut them, and this can cause the medication to degrade," he says.

Extended Release, Coated Pills Can't Be Split

"If want to split a pill, there are a lot that are already scored and are designed to be cut," he says.

"Extended-release tablets and capsules can't be cut."

Yuly Belchikov, PharmD, an assistant director for clinical pharmacy services and education at Long Island Jewish Medical

Center, New Hyde Park, N.Y., says that pill splitting can be a problem for pills with a small therapeutic window. This refers to a pill that needs to be taken in very controlled, precise doses.

“Pill-splitting a medication with a small therapeutic window is concerning because any deviation from the recommended dose, even a small percentage, can have serious consequences,” he says.

Papatya Tankut, PharmD, vice president of pharmacy professional services at CVS Caremark in Woonstocket, R.I., sums it up this way: “Ask a pharmacist or a physician before you split any pill. Don’t decide to do it on your own because there are some toxic effects of splitting pills that weren’t designed to be split.”

“Use a pill-splitting device so you are accurately splitting the dose,” she says, and split pills only on an as-needed basis. “Air or moisture can change the formulation and deem it less effective when you do it in advance.”

Reduce Stress by Journaling



by *Pamela M. Peeke, MD, MPH*



When life's challenges seem overwhelming, women often find that talking about their stress helps them put it in perspective. However, there's another great way to maintain control of your thoughts and decision making throughout each day: Journaling.

I don't mean writing long and detailed stories of your life experiences. Journaling is the simple act of regularly jotting down your life events and feelings on paper-or even at your lap top, desk top, or typewriter. Your journal can help you refine your daily living skills. It gives you the opportunity to reflect

on the experiences/events you've recorded.

You can use journaling to help you deal with stressors you don't feel comfortable sharing with others. Stress psychologists have shown that journaling enhances immune function and can alter the course of [chronic](#) conditions such as [rheumatoid arthritis](#) and [asthma](#). Here are some tips to get you started:

- Subject? Focus on current stressors. Writing about stress helps you step back and consider your options more clearly.
- Technique? To improve health and decrease stress, journal entries should include two things: First, write what happened --the facts about the objective experience. Second, write your feelings about what happened, what you feel and why you feel it.
- Content? Don't hold back! Write

continually for about fifteen minutes with no censoring, until you feel you get it all out.

- Tone? Don't worry. Just let it all hang out. Don't stress over the spelling and grammar. Let it flow and enjoy the process of communicating important feelings on paper.
- When? Write whenever you want or feel you need to. If you have been keeping food diaries to track your eating, perhaps you can combine this with journaling.
- How much? Try it for fifteen minutes a day, everyday.
- Should you share? It is wise to keep your journal to yourself. If you write thinking you may share it, you may be tempted to write for that person. A

journal is about you and your self-care.

- Hate to write? Try talking into a tape recorder. It can be just as good, though perhaps less convenient.
- How will I feel? Some feel a sense of relief; others feel depressed for a time after writing. This will go away, though, as you gain a better understanding of yourself, and your life.

Remember: Writing thoughts and feelings is not a replacement for professional therapy. If you think you might be depressed (if your sad or overwhelmed feelings don't go away or they interfere with your daily functioning) or, if you are suffering from a trauma or other mental health problem, seek help from a licensed professional.

Journaling is a form of preventative

maintenance. It's another tool in your stress resilience toolbox. So buy yourself a beautiful journal or create an electronic one, and get to writing!

Scholarships Available

2011 SF National Conference Scholarship

Applications Now Accepted

Full and partial scholarships are available for the 2011 National Patient Education Conference July 8-10, 2011, in San Francisco. Conference scholarships are intended for those who would be unable to attend without outside financial assistance. The application deadline for interested candidates is Friday, April 22. For more information go to www.scleroderma.org

Help Others Attend the Conference!

The National Conference Scholarship Fund offers financial assistance to qualified individuals to attend the Scleroderma Foundation's National Conference. Please help support the National

Conference Scholarship Program and make a gift today. The more funds we can raise together, the more opportunities we can create for new and aspiring attendees.

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If you are not able to attend the meetings but still would like to “participate,” we encourage you to send your questions and comments regarding the group or this disease to the mailing address below. We will make it a point to address these issues and provide some information as permitted through this newsletter. We would love to hear from you.