Read Those Labels When Using Drugs

Medications which can be purchased from your drugstore without a doctor's prescription—or what are commonly called "over-the-counter" drugs—are entirely safe if they are properly used, and are in many instances effective and helpful. The chief problem which the use of such drugs presents is that many people use them improperly.

The source of guidance for the use of these readily available and widely promoted drugs should be the label which the manufacturer is required by law to affix to the container and through which he provides the user with relevant information about the medication. The same laws which regulate the labeling of medication do NOT apply to the advertising of them, and many people are misinformed and deluded by taking literally all the claims for drugs which are presented in television and radio commercials and in newspaper advertisements.

Here are some precautions which should be followed in the use of over-the-counter drugs:

1) Be sure the drug you buy is intended for the disorder you want to treat. Many commercially available drugs have similar names, and it is all too easy erroneously to pick up medication intended for quite a different illness. If you have any confusion about the exact name of the drug you want, read the indications listed on the label. If your disorder is not specifically listed, do not buy the drug.

2) Do not take the medicine in any greater dosage than the directions indicate, nor any more frequently than instructed. It is not true that if a little medication brings relief, a lot more will bring about a complete cure.

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3) READ THE fine print and follow it to the letter. What the commercial or ad does NOT tell you but what the manufacturer MUST tell on the label is that some drugs which are safe for most people may not be safe for people with specific health problems. If you have high blood pressure, glaucoma, or kidney diseases, many widely used drugs may have an adverse effect on you. The label will warn you of this. It may also point out that the drug is contraindicated (harmful) during pregnancy; in fact, it is strongly urged that a pregnant woman take NO medication without first consulting her doctor.

4) Take the manufacturer at his word. On many drugs it is clearly stated that the medication is intended for temporary relief of minor symptoms and that if the symptoms persist, you should see your physician. Don't take the drug indefinitely.

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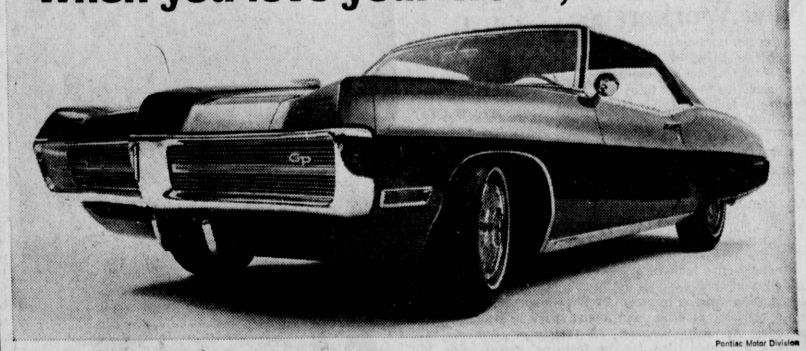
5) BE PARTICULARLY wary about samples of drugs which come unsolicited through the mail. Unless the information on the label leaves no doubt in your mind that it is suitable for you, do not use it. You have no obligation to pay for a drug you do not order. The safest way of dealing with the drug is to throw it away— but don't throw it where children can get at it.

6) Learn to be skeptical — not of the formal information on the label but of accompanying advertising material. The fact that a drug is fast-acting may be meaningless. A drug that is 50 per cent stronger is not necessarily 50 per cent more effective. Whenever the claim is made that a drug is better, ask these two questions: better than WHAT? better for WHOM?

(Prepared and released as a public service by the California Medical Association. Specific questions on the subject should be directed to your physician.)

Marine Pvt. 1.C. **Ronald N. Daggett,** son of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Daggett of 3922 Emerald St., was graduated Oct. 17 from the four-week Aviation Mechanical Fundamentals School at the Naval Air Technical Training Center, Memphis, Tenn.

When you love your work, it shows.



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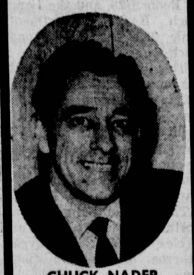

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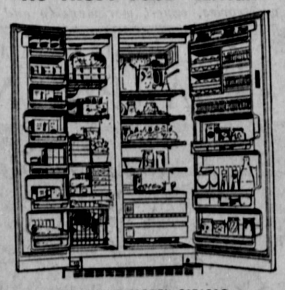

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