

Pre-Reading Discussion: Can taking over-the-counter or prescription medications be dangerous? How do you know how much to take, and how often? How do you find out what the risks and precautions are? Who can you ask if you have questions about medications?

This passage is about a woman who starts taking a new prescription medication for her allergies. She fails to read the ‘Cautions’ on the medication information sheet. Find out what happens.

Pat was a coach in an after school program for kids. She worked outside most of the time. It was May, and for Pat that meant one thing – hay fever. She was allergic to the weeds that grew in a big field next to the school. Every day she would sneeze. Her eyes would water. Her nose would run. It was a real pain.

Pat’s doctor gave her a prescription for Zyrtec. She filled the prescription at a nearby drug store. The pharmacist put a fact sheet about Zyrtec in the bag with the medicine. Then Pat drove to work.

Pat took her first dose when she got to the school. She had not eaten for a few hours. The fact sheet said it was OK to take the medicine on an empty stomach or with food.

It was time to get to work. Pat went outside with the kids. They played games. They sang songs. They ran around a lot. The good news was that Pat did not sneeze or wheeze. Her eyes did not water. She thought, “This medicine is working.” But she was also

feeling very tired. She wished she could go home and lie down. “All this activity must be getting to me,” she thought.

By 6:30 p.m. the kids had gone home. Pat got in her car. She couldn’t wait to get home. She put the car in reverse to back out of her parking spot. She looked behind her and stepped on the gas.

All of a sudden there was a loud crash and a big jolt. Pat’s seat belt locked up. She was stunned. “What on earth?” she cried.

She turned and looked ahead. Her car had smashed into the tree in front of her. She had not put the car in reverse. She had put it in drive instead. “Oh no!” she groaned.

Pat’s car was a wreck. She had to get it towed. She was very upset. “I don’t know how I could have done that?” she cried. “I’ve never done that before. Thank goodness I didn’t hit anyone!”

The new medicine had made her very drowsy. The Zyrtec fact sheet warned not to drive until you know how you react to the medicine. Pat had ignored that warning. She was very sorry that she did.

Questions for Discussion:

Can you relate to Pat's experience?

Have you ever had a reaction to a medication? What were the symptoms? What did you do?

Do you read medicine information or fact sheets? What would you do if you didn't fully understand them?