

Medicines and You

Managing Medications As You Age

“What Will We Learn?”

- ✦ How age affects the medications
- ✦ Most common medication problems
- ✦ Signs of adverse reactions
- ✦ How to support good medication management



“What’s true...as we age?”

- ✦ We take more medications
- ✦ Risk of drug interaction increases
- ✦ The usual “adult dosage” may not be appropriate
- ✦ Medications stay active in our bodies longer

“What happens with our bodies?”

✦ Metabolism changes

Example: liver and kidney

function slow down

✦ Memory function declines

✦ Vision declines

✦ Hearing declines



“Why are older people at risk for medication problems?”

- ✦ Age-related changes
- ✦ Multiple diseases
- ✦ Multiple medications
- ✦ Complex dosage schedules
- ✦ Types of medication taken



❁ “What are the most common medication problems?”

- ❁ Not taking medication
- ❁ Taking too much medication
- ❁ Taking the medication inappropriately
- ❁ Adverse medication reactions
- ❁ Food and drug interactions



“What do people complain about the most?”



- ✖ Inability to read the print on the medication bottle
- ✖ Difficult-to-open bottles
- ✖ Difficulty swallowing pills

“How can you prevent a medication reaction?”

- ✦ Be curious: Understand the drug and the instructions
- ✦ Don't play doctor: Don't tinker with dosage
- ✦ Share your life story: talk about all the drugs you take
- ✦ Watch the clock: the hour of the day can impact effectiveness

Source: AARP Consumer Guide





“What are possible signs of a medication reaction?”

- ✖ Confusion
- ✖ Depression
- ✖ Delirium
- ✖ Inability to sleep
- ✖ Urinary retention
- ✖ Incontinence
- ✖ Weakness
- ✖ Fatigue
- ✖ Loss of appetite
- ✖ Falls
- ✖ Change in speech patterns

“What is the risk of an adverse medication reaction?”

- ✦ 5.6 % for a person taking two drugs
- ✦ 50% for person taking five drugs
- ✦ 100% for a person taking eight or more drugs

Remember: Over-the counter drugs, herbal remedies and herbal teas must be included in the total number of drugs taken

Center for Rural Elderly, 1999



“Where does the pharmacist fit in?”

- ✦ Work with your pharmacist
- ✦ Verify what your doctor told you
- ✦ Use the same pharmacy
- ✦ Re-read the label each time.
- ✦ Keep a medication profile and a wallet card
- ✦ Know what the prescription label means



Know what the prescription label means

- ✚ Take as directed *What were the directions?*
- ✚ Take 3 times a day *Around the clock, waking hours?*
- ✚ Take as needed *Needed for what? Pain? Severe pain? Moderate pain?*
- ✚ Take two tablets daily *When? Morning? Night?*
- ✚ Take before bedtime *Just before? Two hours before?*

“What about costs? Any way to control costs?”

- ✂ Tell your doctor and your pharmacist you have cost concerns. Ask for samples
- ✂ Always “Go Generic”
- ✂ Explore all available discount card options
- ✂ Buy in bulk (but check shelf life)
- ✂ Consider mail order; internet shopping
- ✂ Store medications appropriately

“What are the most important things I need to do”?

- ✦ Be alert to behavior changes in yourself, in others
- ✦ Think about where medications are kept –and how they are kept
- ✦ Ask: “Do I need any help taking my medications?” Does my friend, spouse need help?” (If you need help, get it)
- ✦ Recognize simple things can make a big difference

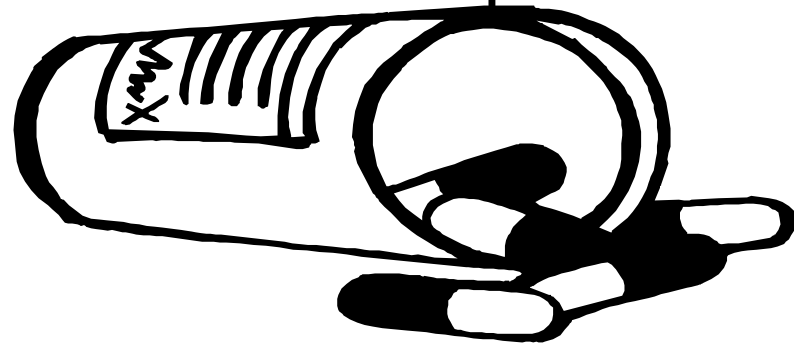


Simple suggestions... such as....

- ✦ Take medications with water
- ✦ Re-read labels each time
- ✦ Always discard old medications
- ✦ Check with your health provider before stopping medications

Summary: Taking Medications Safely

- ✦ Age affects how medications impact us
- ✦ Adverse medication reactions come in many forms; be aware of sneaky symptoms
- ✦ Many adverse reactions can be prevented
- ✦ Vigilance is key



For Further Information...

- ✦ **NeedyMeds.com** is a website that acts as an information warehouse for people who cannot afford medications
- ✦ **Rxassist.org** provides info packet describing options for prescription assistance
- ✦ **Together Rx** (1-800-762-4636) offers free membership and accompanying discounts on 150 different medications



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