



Seniors and Medications

As you age you sometimes develop problems taking medication and should consider yourself as a partner with our doctors and pharmacists concerning our health care. You must remain alert and proactive with the medications you take and know what you are taking and what their purpose is. And always be mindful of drug interactions as they can be very dangerous.

Doctor Visits

Whenever you visit your doctor you should always take ALL of your medications with you. This includes all prescription drugs and any over-the-counter remedies or supplements you are taking. It is very important that every doctor you visit knows what medications you are taking. You should also take any ointments or creams you may be using.



Drug Interactions

The most serious problem you face with taking medications are interactions among them. Drug interaction can be very dangerous! The average senior adult takes more than four prescribed medications and two over-the-counter medications each day. You must keep in mind that as one ages, you become more sensitive to drugs due to a generally slower metabolism and decrease organ function. This affects the how they are absorbed in the body and how your organs will react. It's not uncommon for older adults to experience upset stomach, dizziness, sleep changes, diarrhea, constipation, mood changes, blurred vision and other effects due to the increase sensitivity to medications.

TIP - Always keep a list of your prescribed medications, over-the-counter medicines, ointments and creams in your wallet or purse!

Drug interactions can be easily avoided by keeping each of your doctors informed of all of the medications you are taking. Did you know that blood-thinning medication and aspirin should not be taken at the same time? Did you also know that antacids can interfere with certain drugs taken for the treatment of Parkinson's disease, heart disease and high blood pressure? And taking both

FACT - Kidney function declines about one percent each year starting at age 40! Liver function also declines with age. Both affect the length of time medications stay in your system.



iron and calcium supplements can interfere with the absorption of thyroid medicine.

Side Effects to Be Aware Of

Diphenhydramine which is usually found in sleep aids such as Tylenol PM, Unisom Sleep Gels, and cold and allergy medicines like Benadryl can cause nausea, diarrhea, dizziness, dry mouth, drowsiness, depression, insomnia and lead to falls. Sedating antihistamines such as this can be disastrous for older adults. Not to mention this drug can also affect a man's prostate gland resulting in urinary problems and possible hospital visits.

Mirapex (pramipexole), a treatment for Parkinson's disease can increase the risk of hallucinations in people older than 65. Quinolone antibiotics may also cause hallucinations – examples include Cipro (ciprofloxacin), Levaquin (levofloxacin) and Floxin (ofloxacin).

Taking Cipro and antacids lowers Cipro's effectiveness.

Taking vitamin K as a supplement may reduce the effectiveness of blood thinning medicines like warfarin.

These are only a small example of possible side effect and interactions. Always ask your doctor before taking any over-the-counter supplements including herbal remedies.

Develop a Routine

How many times have you forgotten if you've taken your medication or not? You're not alone. Studies show that 40 – 75 percent of older adults don't take medicines at the right time or in the right amount. Here are a couple of ways you may want to try to get improve this situation.

- Use a calendar
- Use a pill box, some pharmacies will pre-load weekly pill boxes for you – usually they charge a small fee for this
- Start each day with your medicine bottle in an upright position, as you take the medicine, flip the bottle upside down
- Use meals or bedtime as a clue to take your medicine
- Make a chart



Cutting the Cost of Medications

- Ask your doctor for free samples
- Ask for a senior citizen discount
- Ask for the generic equivalent
- Call around for the lowest price
- Many pharmacies will now match Walmart's \$4.00 program – ask!
- Buy store brand rather than name brand over-the-counter products
- Contact your local AARP
- Try mail order
- For ongoing medications, it's sometimes cheaper to buy in quantities of 100

Maturity Health Matters

“Maturity Health Matters” is an online newsletter just for seniors and their caregivers. Visit this website for more information.

www.fda.gov/cdrh/maturityhealthmatters/

*Source:
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