

## PRESCRIPTIONS, DRUGS, SUPPLEMENTS

### *Nine things you need to know about managing medication*

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Seniors and the elderly often have chronic medical conditions and illnesses that require more prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs and supplements. Older adults process medications differently and therefore might be at a higher risk of adverse drug reactions. Because of HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) regulations seniors are protected against disclosure of their medical information without specific permission. To ensure that the medication regimen for the elderly is safe and appropriate, follow these nine basic guidelines.

1. Maintain a current list of all physicians names, phone numbers and addresses.
2. Keep a current list of all diagnoses and medical problems.
3. Maintain a current list of all allergic reactions to medications including the date of the reaction and specific symptoms experienced. (Note: There's a difference between an allergic reaction and an intolerance to drugs side effects or sensitivity).
4. Maintain a current list of all prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, herbal products and supplements including how each is actually taken.
5. Maintain a current list of the reason each medication is prescribed.
6. Keep a record of all pharmacies where the prescriptions are filled. It is common for people to use a mail order pharmacy and more than one local pharmacy.

7. Know the appearance (size, shape and color) of each medication. Keep in mind that generic drugs are available from many manufacturers and the shape and size can vary with each. If the appearance of a medication is different ask your pharmacist why.

8. Compliance with physicians orders is a common issue for older adults. Have all prescriptions written by the physician been filled? Ascertain whether or not your family member is able to take all medications according to physicians directions. Do you need to have special labeling for visually impaired seniors? Is the product difficult to swallow? Some medications should not be chewed or crushed. Is the time the dose is scheduled convenient? Some medications need to be given at a specific time of day for maximum benefit or to prevent interference from food or another medication. Does your family member have a difficult time remembering when to take a regularly scheduled medication? Ask your pharmacist about the availability of specialized packaging products to help manage these issues.

9. Find a pharmacist who is willing to answer all your questions and to give you the information you need to monitor side effects, drug-drug interactions, drug-food interactions and help you in preventing adverse drug reactions.

Forms are available on several Web sites that can be printed and used to record the information in the above items one through seven. Keep this information updated as drugs are added or deleted. Take this medication list to all doctor appointments and to the pharmacy when getting refills or new medications. Plan enough time to ask questions and allow the pharmacist to review the list of current medications for possible drug interactions and to discuss appropriate and inappropriate therapies.

If you need to find a Senior Care Pharmacist in your area, go to:  
[www.seniorcarepharmacist.com](http://www.seniorcarepharmacist.com).

Other potentially useful Web sites for drug information include:  
[www.rxlist.com](http://www.rxlist.com)

[www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org)  
[www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)  
[www.safemedication.com](http://www.safemedication.com)

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