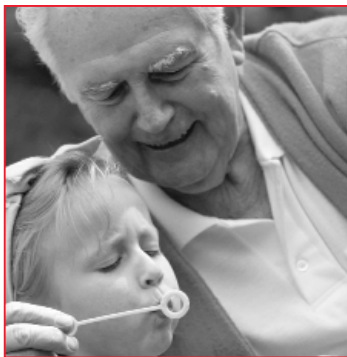


POISON
HelpTM
1-800-222-1222

SENIOR SAFETY GUIDE



GUIDE FOR SENIOR SAFETY WITH MEDICATION

Prescription Drugs

Statistics show that adults over 65 years old consume more than 30 percent of all medications prescribed and purchase 40 percent of all over-the-counter medications. Recent studies show the average person over 65 takes between two and seven prescription medications daily.

With aging, many body processes are altered and often slow down, affecting the way medications are absorbed, distributed, metabolized and excreted. These elements combine to create a greater risk of drug interactions, drug/food interactions, and side effects.

Tips to reduce adverse drug reactions:

- **Make sure your medications are clearly labeled and carefully follow the label instructions.** Read the label and examine the medication at every dose.
- **Review all your medications with your doctor or pharmacist at least once a year or when you start taking a new medication.** This includes all prescription medications, non-prescription medications, herbal medications, dietary supplements and any other type of medication.
- **Get prescriptions refilled far enough in advance to avoid running out of medication.**
- **Take medications at the proper time.** Keep a record of the medications you are taking and organize your medication schedule. Check with your pharmacist or health care provider for tips on organizing and keeping track of your medications and their schedules.
- **Never take medication in the dark.** Turn on the light to ensure you have the right medication and take the correct dose. If you need glasses to read, be sure to wear them when taking medication.

- **Never take more medication than prescribed.** Taking twice as much never means that you will get better twice as fast.
- **Never take any medication that has been prescribed for a friend or relative.**
- **Before you drink alcohol or take non-prescription drugs with your prescription drugs, check with your doctor or pharmacist.**
- **Know what your medications look like.** If a refill of a prescription looks different than before, consult your pharmacist or poison center to make sure it is the correct medication.
- **Keep all medications in their original containers and store them in a cool, dry place, away from bright light.** Never mix medications in the same container.
- **Discard old medications you are no longer using or those that are outdated.** To keep children or pets from getting into them, flush the medication down the toilet.
- **Keep the poison center phone number 1-800-222-1222 available.** Call them with any questions you have about medication interactions, errors, effects, identification, or accidental poisonings.



OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS

There are more than 100,000 over-the-counter drugs that you can buy without a prescription. The range of health problems that can be treated with non-prescription medications is large and continues to grow. But like prescription medications, they are serious medications that need to be taken with care. Common over-the-counter medications include pain relievers, laxatives, cold preparations and antacids. All of these can cause an adverse drug interaction when taken with prescription drugs.

Tips for taking over-the-counter (OTC) medications

- **Read the label.** The label will tell you: What the medication is for, how to take it, the active ingredients, and precautions for use. Take the medication EXACTLY as stated on the label – more is not better!
- **Know what types of OTC medications to avoid taking with your prescription medications.** When in doubt, ask your pharmacist or doctor before you buy or use an OTC medication. Taking an OTC medication safely is too important for guesswork.
- **Select OTC products that will treat only the symptoms you have.** Multi-ingredient products, such as combination cold remedies, may medicate you for problems and symptoms you don't have.
- **Use extra caution when taking more than one OTC drug product at a time.** Always compare active ingredients before taking more than one OTC medication at the same time. Many OTC medications contain the same active ingredient, which means you may be getting more than the recommended dose without even knowing it.
- **Don't use OTC medications after their expiration date.**
- **Most non-prescription medications are intended for temporary use;** talk to your doctor if taking an OTC medication becomes more than a temporary practice.

FOOD SAFETY

Why are seniors at risk for food poisoning?

As we age, our immune system function decreases. Inflammation of the stomach and a decrease in stomach acid occurs. These factors increase the risk of infections caused by bacteria living on food. Seniors have decreased appetites and are usually cooking for themselves and/or their spouses. This means there are more food leftovers to be stored in the refrigerator, thus increasing risk of bacterial growth.

Symptoms of food borne illness

Common symptoms of food borne illness include diarrhea, abdominal cramping, fever, headache, vomiting and exhaustion. Symptoms will vary according to the type of bacteria and by the amount of contaminated food eaten. Symptoms may occur as early as 1/2 hour after contaminated food is eaten to several days afterward. If symptoms are significant or persistent, see your doctor.

Prevention

- **AVOID:** Seniors should avoid eating raw or undercooked meat or eggs, raw shellfish, alfalfa sprouts, and unpasteurized milk, cheese, fruit or vegetable juices.
- **CLEAN:** Wash hands and food preparation surfaces before and after each use with warm soapy water. Plastic cutting boards are easier to clean. Consider using paper towels to clean surfaces or wash cloth towels often. Always wash any plate, pan, cutting board or container that was used with raw meat before using it for another purpose.
- **COOK:** All food requiring cooking should be done thoroughly. Order food cooked “well done” at restaurants.
- **CHILL:** Refrigerate or freeze leftovers (including restaurant leftovers) within 2 hours after cooking and reuse as soon as possible. If more than 2 hours have gone by, throw the food out. Divide large amounts of leftovers into smaller containers for quicker cooling.

ARE YOU A HAZARD TO YOUR GRANDCHILDREN?

A study conducted by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission states that 36 percent of childhood ingestion accidents related to prescriptions involve a grandparent's medication. Prescriptions for older adults are some of the most toxic medications, posing the greatest threat of a tragic outcome if ingested by a child. Even the most loving grandparents can put their grandchildren in danger when they unknowingly overlook simple precautions.

POISON PREVENTION TIPS

- When visiting a home with young children, make sure medications in purses, bathroom kits, and suitcases are not available to children.
- Be careful of weekly pill minders – they help to organize medication, but most are not child resistant.
- If young children visit your home, remember to keep medications and household chemicals locked or out of children's reach.
- Avoid taking medications in front of young children, as they like to imitate.
- Only give infants and children over-the-counter medications that are especially formulated for their age and weight.



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