



## GUIDE TO PROPER MEDICATION USE AND STORAGE

As we age, we are often faced with health conditions that need regular and ongoing treatment through medication. It is important to be aware that increased use of medications and normal body changes caused by aging can increase the chance of unwanted or even harmful drug interactions. Unfortunately, adverse drug reactions frequently go unnoticed or are misdiagnosed in the elderly because they can sometimes mimic the signs or symptoms of a disease, are thought to be caused by an existing medical condition, or are thought to be the result of the onset of a new health problem.\*\* Physical reactions to medications, such as fatigue, falling, or weight loss, may be mistakenly labeled as “normal” aging.

The more you know about the medications that you or your loved ones are taking, and the more you speak with the appropriate healthcare professionals, the easier it will be to avoid the potential problems that can occur. At CareFocus Companion, we understand the importance of providing care and support for your loved ones. As a senior, or someone who helps care for them, it is important to educate yourself on the proper use and storage of medications. Use the checklist below, including CareFocus’ suggestions for items to consider as a resource to help guide you in asking the proper questions to ensure safe medication usage for you and your loved ones.

\*The information that follows is presented for the purpose of educating the consumer on a variety of wellness and health care topics (the “Information”). Nothing contained is intended to be instructional for medical diagnosis or treatment. The Information contained is compiled from a variety of sources. The Information should not be considered complete and should not be used in place of a visit with, call to, consultation or advice from your Physician or other health care provider.

Proper Medication Use and Storage*	
Questions to Ask:	Items to Consider:
Are medication labels clear and easy to read?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Double check prescriptions when they are picked up from the pharmacy to ensure that they are the proper type and dosage of medication (as prescribed).</li> <li>✓ Count the number of tablets or capsules to ensure the prescription was filled properly.</li> <li>✓ Make sure labels clearly list the type of medicine, quantity and frequency in which it should be taken, and the duration of the prescription.</li> </ul>
Are medication side effects known by the user?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Be aware of any potential side effects of medications that are being taken. If any unusual symptoms are experienced, it is essential to report this to a Physician as soon as possible.</li> </ul>
Are medications known or referred to by any other names?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Generic versions of prescribed medications typically go by alternate names.</li> <li>✓ Medications can have more than one name.</li> </ul>
Does the user have known allergies to any medication(s)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ If there is a known allergy, it is best to avoid that medication. The user may also be told to avoid similar medications.</li> <li>✓ Make sure the prescribing Physician is aware of any known drug allergies prior to writing a prescription.</li> <li>✓ If a medication is being taken and there appears to be a reaction, contact a Physician immediately.</li> <li>✓ If there is difficulty breathing, call 911 or go to the emergency room to seek immediate treatment.</li> </ul>
Are there food or activity restrictions while taking this medication(s)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Certain food, beverage, and medication combinations can cause an adverse reaction. It is important to be aware of potential issues so they can be avoided before they occur.</li> </ul>
Is it necessary to take a medication with food?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It is important to be aware of whether the medication that is prescribed should be taken with food, after food, or before food.</li> </ul>

*Checklist continued on back...*

Questions to Ask:	Items to Consider:
What should be done if a dose of medication is missed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sometimes missing a dose of medication can have an adverse effect, so make sure the user is aware of how this should be handled, should the situation arise.</li> </ul>
Is the proper device to take the precise dosage of medication readily available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ If a pill needs to be split in half, purchase a tablet cutter or ask a Pharmacist to assist.</li> <li>✓ Capsules or gel caps should never be divided, unless instructed to do so.</li> <li>✓ Measuring spoons can vary, so if a measuring tool came with the prescription, it should be used.</li> </ul>
Is the medication in a form that can be easily swallowed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ If there are difficulties swallowing the medication, ask the Physician if there is a liquid or alternate form available.</li> <li>✓ Pills should never be crushed and mixed with anything unless specified by a Physician.</li> <li>✓ Double check the method in which a medication is supposed to be administered. Not all medications need to be taken orally.</li> </ul>
Is there the potential for adverse interactions with the use of multiple medications?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It is important to be aware of any potential drug interactions. Not all medications can be taken together.</li> <li>✓ Make certain that the prescribing Physician is aware of all medications (prescribed, over the counter, dietary and herbal supplements) that are currently being used.</li> <li>✓ Do not start taking any new medications without consulting a Physician first.</li> </ul>
Has the medicine cabinet been cleaned out recently?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Cleaning out a medicine cabinet is something that should be done regularly.</li> <li>✓ Remove any expired medications, which may no longer be safe to use, to prevent any accidental consumption of an older/outdated drug.</li> <li>✓ Dispose of all medications properly by taking them to a Physician or Pharmacist. Flushing medications down the toilet or throwing them out in the trash could be a potential environmental issue.</li> </ul>
Are medications all stored in the same location?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keep all medications in the same place to find them easier when needed.</li> <li>✓ Make certain that medications are kept out of reach or inaccessible to children or people who may misuse them.</li> </ul>
Are medications stored at the recommended temperatures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Most medications will have a storage temperature or recommendation listed. Be certain that these guidelines are followed.</li> <li>✓ Insulin, some liquid antibiotics, and suppositories need to be kept in cool places.</li> <li>✓ Nitroglycerin should be kept out of warm places.</li> <li>✓ Bathrooms are sometimes too moist for certain medications.</li> </ul>
Are medications stored in their original container?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keeping medications in their original containers helps in remembering what the item is, how it should be taken, and how old it is.</li> <li>✓ Medicines should not be mixed together in the same bottle.</li> <li>✓ Pillboxes may be used to help know which medication should be taken and when, however, keep a written record of the Physician's recommendations and information about the medicines on hand.</li> </ul>

\*\*www.cfhinfo.org

**For more information or recommendations on how to ensure safe medication usage for you and your loved ones, contact CareFocus Companion Services today!**

