



## **Safety Tips on Drugs and Medication**

*Article submitted by Rebecca Sharp Colmer: Eldercare Advocate, Author, Publisher, Speaker*

*Me & My Caregivers – 800-530-9129*

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Did you know that most people over age 65 take about two to seven prescription drugs and at least two over-the-counter drugs each day? Keeping track of medications can be a monumental task. Overseeing your loved-one's medications may be your most important caregiving task.

Because seniors usually see more than one doctor, it is very important to share medical records and communicate about medications and treatments. Whether you are taking a prescription, any over-the-counter medication, vitamin, cream or ointment, home remedy, or herbal remedy, it is imperative that you discuss them with your doctor AND pharmacist. It is also important that you follow their instructions exactly to avoid dangerous reactions and side effects.

### **Did you know:**

- According to the FDA, 40-75 percent of seniors take the wrong amount of medication or take it at the wrong time.
- Almost 40 percent of all drug reactions each year involve people over age 60.

### **Here are some safety tips on drugs and medications:**

- Make sure that all of your healthcare professionals communicate with each other on all medications, conditions, and treatments.
- Be clear on how and when to take all medications. Don't be hesitant to ask your doctor and pharmacist to write down step-by-step instructions. Ask if they need to be taken with anything. Ask if there are any food or drug interactions that may interfere with the medication. Know how long you need to take the medication. Educate yourself about possible side effects of your medications.
- Go to a pharmacist who keeps a "drug profile" for customers and will alert you about interaction problems.
- Make sure all medications are clearly labeled. Check your prescriptions before leaving the pharmacy. Make sure that the correct patient's name is on the bottle and that the directions match what the doctor said. Ask the pharmacist for easy-open caps, large print labels, and oversized bottles if needed.
- Ask the pharmacist if crushing pills or putting them in liquid will degrade the medicine, making it less effective.
- Never take medication in the dark.
- Read the medicine-bottle labels before EACH dose.

- Only take the amount prescribed for you.
- Develop a system for taking medication. Use a container system. Ask your pharmacist whether your pillbox or pill organizer will affect the stability of your medication.
- Never share medications, even if the symptoms are the same.
- If you miss a dose of medication, call the pharmacist to find out what to do next.
- Don't leave medications out where a child or pet can get them.
- Throw out drugs that are old. Ask your pharmacist for the best way to dispose of them.

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Posted on [www.CaregiverClassDirectory.com](http://www.CaregiverClassDirectory.com), July-August 2011

File Name: ARTICLE\_safety\_tips\_drugs.doc