

MEDICATION USE AND OLDER ADULTS



A brown paper bag may hold the key to safer use of medications...

If you have a chronic condition, you may routinely take many different kinds of medications and the dose or times of the medication may need to be adjusted as your health changes. Often, you may have ordered medications through different doctors, particularly if you visit a number of specialists. These situations can lead to a great deal of confusion when taking medications. As a safety measure, ask to schedule a “brown bag check-up” with your primary doctor or local pharmacist. A brown-bag check-up is when you gather all of your current medications and over-the-counter products into a brown paper bag and show them all to your doctor or pharmacist so they may review for any potential problems.

Schedule your brown-bag appointment in advance so the doctor or pharmacist may schedule enough time for the visit. Remember to take any prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, herbal products, supplements or vitamins you are using. During the appointment, the doctor or pharmacist will review all of the medications and products you are currently taking, to match them with those listed on your medical record or pharmacy profile. They can check all medications for the correct dosage strength, frequency, and identify any outdated or discontinued medications. These practitioners can also screen the medications and products for potential duplication of therapy or side effects. This is why it is important to include non-prescription products in the bag.

A brown bag check-up is helpful to patients, physicians and pharmacists! This review will help healthcare practitioners determine proper use of the combined medications, and identify any special precautions you need to know. This is also a good time for the doctor to discuss with you any special laboratory testing that may be needed with certain drugs. You should use this time to ask any questions about your medications. Write prepared questions so you do not forget to ask. Having a single doctor “in charge” or aware of all of the medications and products that you take, is a safe rule. If this is impossible, keep your list of medications and over-the counter products up-to-date, and share this information with every doctor or healthcare provider you visit. Remember to fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy or inform your pharmacist of any over-the counter, herbal or mail order prescriptions you are taking so that there is complete oversight of your medications. Consider making an appointment today for a brown bag check-up, or attend this type of sponsored event when offered through your pharmacy, church or senior center.

Source: *Institute for Safe Medication Practices* <https://www.ismp.org/newsletters/consumer/alerts/BrownBag.asp>

