

Medication and the Older Adult (Part 2)

The purpose of today's article is to follow up from Part 1 regarding how we can prevent medication misuse among older adults. After reading this you will have a greater familiarity with drugs commonly used by older adults, typical adverse reactions to drugs, and age-related changes in how drugs are metabolized. And lastly you will have an improved ability to relate critical information to your health care providers and ask important questions relevant to your medication use.

There are a number of age related physical changes that can impact medication use and therefore should be considered when taking certain medications. Those include an increase in body fat, decrease in body water, decrease in action of gastrointestinal system, decrease in albumin, and a decrease in liver and kidney function. All of these changes can have an impact on how a body absorbs, or metabolizes drugs – which will could ultimately impact their effectiveness or contribute to adverse reactions.

Adverse Drug Reactions

Adverse Drug Reactions include gastrointestinal distress, hypotension/falling, impotence, nausea/vomiting, sedation/drowsiness, urinary problems and vision disturbances. While many common prescribed drugs and over the counter medications can cause adverse reactions, a common drug that many people do not consider is alcohol. **Alcohol** is the one drug that is associated with every one of these adverse drug reactions.

Prevention of medication misuse begins with open communication with your doctor. Open communication between patients and providers empowers patients to carry out their physician's recommendations and take greater control over their own health. Unfortunately, this role often makes seniors uncomfortable. They tend to relinquish decision-making to the medical authority and assume a more comfortable passive role. In addition, some physicians may underestimate a patient's need and desire for information. They may also lack the skill, time, and inclination to meet these patient needs. According to research, only one-quarter of senior patients ask about side effects of medication. To prevent medication errors, patients must assert themselves and ask their physician and/or pharmacist questions about the drugs they are prescribed. In this activity, we will share a tool that can help improve communication with medical professionals.



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PATIENT PASSPORT	
My information:	
Name:	_____
Address:	_____
Phone:	_____
In case of an emergency call:	
Name:	_____ Relationship to me: _____
Address:	_____
Phone:	_____
Chronic Conditions:	

Medications I am currently taking:	
Name of Drug:	_____
Date Prescribed:	_____
Doctor's Name:	_____
Prescribed for:	_____
Color/Shape/Strength:	_____
Directions/Cautions:	_____

Talking with your Doctor

What gets in the way of open communication between you and your doctor? What do you do about a doctor who is rushed or uncommunicative?

Speaking with the doctor can be confusing and even intimidating. Carrying a list of /information to share with your doctor will help you remember to say what you want to say, particularly when you are stressed or concerned.

A Patient Passport and brown bag check-up are “tools” to help prevent medical mishaps. Older adults should make sure their doctors know about all the medications, including over-the-counter medications, all vitamins and any supplements they are taking to make sure they aren't at risk for any adverse reactions. After reviewing all medications with your doctor or pharmacist, create a passport that includes your physician information, emergency contact, prescriptions, date prescribed, etc.



Keep your passport or a small card listing all your medications in your possession at all times. In an emergency situation, this record could provide valuable information to medical personnel.

Have any of you ever had a brown bag check-up? Does your doctor know about vitamins and any supplements you take in addition to medications he or she prescribes for you? 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.

For more information on creating your Patient Passport and more information including a list of do's and don'ts please visit our resource page at www.ourplaceinc.org/programs/detail/wellness-for-senior-education

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



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