



Senior Series

A partnership between Ohio State University Extension
and Ohio Aging Network professionals



For more information, visit the Ohio Department of Aging web site at: <http://www.goldenbuckeye.com>
and Ohio State University Extension's "Aging in Ohio" web site at: <http://seniorseries.osu.edu>

Medication Misuse Among Older Adults

Although aging affects how medications are used by our bodies, a major factor affecting how well a medication works is whether or not we take the medication as we are told to.

If we don't use medications as we are told to, they may hurt or even kill us. Many older adults do not take their medications correctly. There are a number of reasons why misuse occurs:

- Not understanding how to take the medications
- Not hearing how to take the medications
- Not getting the medication
- The medication tasting bad or bitter
- Having a confusing dosage schedule
- Missing some of the medications or skipping doses

- Afraid to take the medications
- Not being able to afford medications (medications costing too much money)
- Not being able to get to the medication store
- Not being able to read the labels or see the medications
- Not being able to open "childproof" medication bottles

On the next page are some ways to avoid medication misuse. If you have questions about a medication, experience problems, or simply do not want to take a medication, consult your doctor or pharmacist right away.

Reference

Senior Series Volume 2, The Center on Rural Elderly, University of Missouri System.

Problem	Possible Solutions
Hard time seeing	Ask pharmacist to use large print on label.
	Use a magnifying glass to check labels before taking medication.
Hard time hearing	Let others know if you did not hear the instructions.
	Ask doctor/pharmacist to write instructions.
	Ask someone to go with you to the doctor.
Complex dosage schedule	Write down your schedule clearly and use colors to differentiate times of day. Use daily/weekly pill boxes. Coordinate the time to take medications with specific activities (i.e., meal time, time of favorite television program, when mail arrives, etc.).
Forgetfulness	Use memory aids and daily or weekly pill boxes. Place notes to yourself in places you will see them.
Hard time moving	Use a pharmacy that will deliver prescriptions (cost may be higher).
Limited use of hands	Ask pharmacist for easy-to-open medication caps.
Many medications	Have doctor check your medicines.
	Ask your pharmacist to check all your medicines.
Many doctors	Make sure each doctor and your pharmacist know all medications you are taking.
	Purchase prescriptions at only one pharmacy.
Cost of medications	Take advantage of discount programs.
	Call local pharmacies and compare prices.
	Ask doctor or pharmacist whether a generic medication will be as effective and less costly.
	Ask doctor to prescribe generic medications if possible. Ask doctor or pharmacist if you qualify for a patient assistance program through a medication company.
	Ask your pharmacist to review your medicines to see if there is a way to lower your costs.

Revised by Dr. Bella Mehta, PharmD (August 2007).

Visit Ohio State University Extension's web site "Ohioline" at: <http://ohioline.osu.edu>

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA.

Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868