

Tips for Taking Medications Safely

As we age, our bodies can become more sensitive to medications and their side effects. You may need less medicine than you used to, or you may not need them at all. It is important that you try everything before starting a new medication to help you avoid drug side effects and interactions. However, there are times when medications are necessary and helpful. It is good to periodically ask your healthcare provider/pharmacist if any medications should be stopped or if your doses should be lowered.

Taking medications safely is critical for all adults – but even more so as we age. The FDA estimates that 1.3 million people each year are injured because of a medication error. Here are some important tips to consider:

- Do not start or stop medications without talking to your healthcare provider/pharmacist first
- Keep a current medication list with you at all times. This list should contain:
 - The name of the medication, dosage, frequency
 - The reason for the medication
 - The prescriber's name
 - The pharmacy name and number
 - Any drug allergies
- Use a pill box, list, or calendar to help you remember to take your medications
- Use alarms to remind you that it is time to take your medications. Check out the [Alzheimer's Store](#) for electronic pill box dispensers.
- Keep a journal and write down changes in memory or behavior, especially after starting or stopping a medication, and bring it to all medical appointments. **If you see a sudden change in memory, thinking or behavior 24-72 hours after starting a new medication, call the prescribing doctor immediately.
- Use the same pharmacy for all of your medications if possible so they can help make sure your medications are not interacting and are safe for you

Don't be afraid to speak up at medical appointments to ask detailed questions about new or ongoing medications. Write out your questions in advance so you are prepared to talk to a doctor who is busy. You are entitled to know benefits and any potential risks or side effects. Finally, remember your pharmacist can be very helpful answering your questions as well.