



NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS ASSOCIATION

**Safe & Sound:
How to Prevent Medication Mishaps**

**A Family Caregiver Healthcare
Education Program**

A Who What Where Why When Tool Kit

Table of Contents

- 1 Advisors
- 2 Funders
- 3 **WHY** This Toolkit
- 4 The **WHO** of Medication Safety
- 5 **WHAT** Questions Family Caregivers Should Ask
- 7 Actions Family Caregivers Can Take
- 8 The Medication List – What Should Be on It?
- 9 **WHERE** are Medication Mishaps Most Likely to Occur
- 11 Medication Problems Arise Most often **WHEN**
- 12 Appendix
 - Resources for Free or Reduced Price Medications
 - Examples of Medication Lists
 - A Sampling of Good Consumer-focused Web Sites on Medication Safety
 - A Glossary of Rx Terms Family Caregivers Need to Know

Advisors

This tool kit, is a supplement to the webinar:
Safe & Sound How to Prevent Medication Mishaps.
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WHY This Toolkit



Because family caregivers and their loved ones are the only people who are consistent across all care settings. Everyone else can and does change. People with chronic conditions have multiple doctors. Nurses change shifts in hospitals. Pharmacists change locations.

Like it or not family caregivers are the de facto managers of their loved one's medication regimen. And it does need to be managed because so many things can go wrong.

Medication errors harm an estimated 1.5 million people yearly

Source: Kohn, Linda T, Corrigan Janet M, Donaldson, Molla S Editors; *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System* Institute of Medicine 2000, National Academy Press, Washington, DC

Good health outcomes are three times less likely for patients who do not take medications correctly as compared to those that do

Source: DiMatteo, MR, Lepper, HS, Croghan TW...*Patient Adherence and Medical Treatment Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis*; Medical Care vol. 40 # 9, 2002, pp 794-8112002

Between 40-75% of older people do not take their medications correctly

Source: *FDA Consumer Magazine: Publication No. FDA 03-1315C*; revised September 2003

Poor medication adherence has been estimated to cost approximately \$290 billion annually in total direct and indirect healthcare costs

Source: Ernst, Frank R and Grizzle, Amy J; *Drug-Related Morbidity: and Mortality: Updating the Cost-of-Illness Model*, Vol. 41, No. 2 March/April 2001 Journal of the American Pharmaceutical Association. Note: This study estimated the cost at \$177 billion annually. In July 2009, the estimate was updated to \$290 billion by the New England Healthcare Institute.

Improper use of medications causes 18 million ER visits a year

Source: Zed, Peter J. PharmD, Abu-Laban, Riyadh, MD, Balen Robert, M. PharmD, et al: *Incidence, severity and preventability of medication-related visits to the emergency department: a prospective study*, Canadian Medication Association Journal, June 3, 2008; 178 (12). doi:10.1503/cmaj.071594.

The WHO of Medication Safety



A medication safety team includes members from different professions plus you and your loved one.



Prescribers: Doctors, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, Dentists, Podiatrists, Et Al

These are the people with the legal authority to write a prescription. We all know doctors are known for their poor handwriting. Making sure you know exactly what is on the prescription is really important.



Pharmacists:

They fill and refill your prescriptions and can be a great source of information about medication side effects and potential interactions with both other Rx and over the counter (OTC) remedies as well – and you don't need an appointment to talk with them.



Hospital Staff: Primarily Nurses and Discharge Planners

Nurses dispense medications, hook up IVs, etc. They are responsible for making sure patients get all their medications – including the ones they take at home for problems not associated with the cause of their hospital stay. Don't be afraid to ask if your loved one has had his/her usual medications.

Discharge planners are responsible for ensuring you know everything you have to do when you and your loved one go home. They are usually the people who actually hand you new prescriptions. It is critically important that you understand everything expected of you and your loved one, so don't leave until you do.

WHAT Questions Family Caregivers Should Ask:



Checklist

How will I know the prescribed medicine is working?

What are the possible side effects?

Are there any side effects I should especially look out for?

What should I do if these occur?

Can I do anything to avoid or minimize possible side effects?

Will this drug interact with what my loved one is currently taking (including over-the-counter medications)?

Are there medications to avoid while on this?

How should my loved one take this medicine?

With/without food?

Are there any foods that should be avoided?

WHAT Questions Family Caregivers Should Ask: *Continued*



When should my loved one take the medication?

How long is the drug supposed to be taken?

What might happen if I skip a dose and/or all of the pills aren't taken?

If a medication looks different when you refill it, ask why!

If you or your loved one are on multiple medications, ask if they can all be taken at the same time to minimize the possibility of missing a dose.

Ask for advice when purchasing OTC medications, herbals and supplements, including how they will react with prescribed medications.

How much does this medicine cost?

What are my options if I cannot afford it? (A list of sources for free or reduced price medications is included in the appendix.)

Does it require a pre-authorization?

Ask about Medication Therapy Management (MTM) as a resource.

Actions Family Caregivers Can Take



- Use a single pharmacy if at all possible.
- Develop a strong rapport with your pharmacist and let him/her know you value their advice.
- Maintain an up-to-date medication list -carry two copies with you at all times (one to keep, one to give out when necessary) or carry it on a flash drive.
- Describe symptoms accurately. Don't suggest a diagnosis.
- Come up with an easy way for managing medications on a daily basis.
- Monitor doses through the use of pill boxes or other technology.
- Use auto-refill programs – when available.
- Know what to do if a dose is accidentally skipped.
- Dispose of Unused Medications Properly.
 - Step 1: Crush or dilute medication
 - Step 2: Put medication in plastic bag
 - Step 3: Add kitty litter, sawdust, or coffee grounds to plastic bag
 - Step 4: Seal plastic bag and place in trash

NOTE: *Most medications should not be flushed, but there are a small number that should be. Check with the pharmacist to find out if your medications should or should not be flushed.*

The Medication List – What Should Be on It?



At a Minimum:

- Name of drug – generic and brand names
- Dose
- Instructions:
 - How and when to take the medication
 - What not to do when taking the medication
- What the drug is treating
- OTC and herbal medicines with their doses

Additional Helpful Information

- What the pill/capsule/liquid looks like
- Potential side effects
- Drug and other allergies
- Start and stop dates
- Name/contact info of prescriber
 - (physician/physician assistant/nurse practitioner, etc.)
- Name/contact info for pharmacy that filled the prescription(s)

NOTE: Links to sample forms are in the appendix

The form is titled "My Medicines—How Can I Get the Most From Them?". It includes instructions: "Fill out the medicine chart below for all the medicines you take. This will help you know how, when, and why you take each medicine. Make sure you know the name, exact shape, color, and any words on your medicines." and "Mark medicine refill dates on a calendar. Use reminder notes to remember to take your medicines." The chart is a table with the following columns: "Name and Strength of Medicine", "How Much I Take", "When I Take It", "I Take It For", "What My Pill Looks Like", "Dates to Refill Rx", and "Special Instructions". The table has 11 rows for data entry. At the bottom, there are two lines for "Doctor's office contact name / phone number" and "Pharmacy contact name / phone number". A small circular logo with a caduceus is in the top right corner of the form area.

WHERE are Medication Mishaps Most Likely to Occur



At the HOSPITAL

- Make sure a copy of your loved one's medication list gets put into the file and that medications s/he takes regularly that have nothing to do with why s/he is in the hospital are given.
- Get to know the nursing staff.
- Gather all the information you can about the discharge process very soon after your loved one is admitted.
- Don't leave the hospital until you understand all of the discharge instructions. Be sure to ask whether any new prescriptions provided are to replace a medication you have at home.

At the DOCTOR'S Office

- If you're not sure the medication list is up to date bring all the bottles to the doctor's office. Ask for a print out of the updated list the doctor creates during the visit.
- Develop a good rapport with the office staff.
- Clearly report all of your loved one's symptoms; don't try and diagnose the problem.
- Write all your questions down so you don't forget them and you can clearly state them.
- Have the doctor spell out the information on any prescriptions s/he is giving you so you can write it down in your own handwriting.

WHERE are Medication Mishaps Most Likely to Occur *Continued*



At the PHARMACY

- Make sure you are being given the right medication. If you are renewing medications, make sure the refill looks just like your previous prescription.
- Establish a friendly relationship with the pharmacist and the pharmacy “techs” too.
- Ask the pharmacist’s advice about over-the-counter medications and if they will react with your loved one’s prescription medications.
- The pharmacist is a great source of information about medications in general. Take advantage of the knowledge that they have and turn to them when you have medication questions.

At HOME

- Write the name of the condition being treated on each container of pills.
- Develop an easy to use medication distribution and reminder system.
- If your pharmacy has an automatic refill program, take advantage of it. It means you will have one less thing on your “to do” list.
- Update the medication list each time a medication is stopped or started.
- Dispose of unused or expired medications appropriately. Most medicines should NOT be flushed down the toilet, but rather mixed with kitty litter, coffee grounds, etc. and put in the trash. Ask the pharmacist about how the medications you and your loved one take should be disposed of when they are no longer needed.

Medication Problems Arise Most often **WHEN**



- Using multiple pharmacies
- Taking multiple medications
- Prescriptions are not taken as directed
- Prescriptions are not taken at all
- Prescribers/pharmacists are unaware of over-the-counter medications, herbals and supplements being taken
- Your loved one is changing settings – hospital to rehab or home, or even from floor to floor in a hospital or room to room
- There is a staffing shift change within the facility

Appendix



Medication Forms:

Developed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AboutFDA/ReportsManualsForms/Forms/UCM095018.pdf>

*Adapted by the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
(ASCP) Foundation for the Center for Medicines & Healthy Aging*

http://www.medsandaging.org/documents/PersonalMedList_000.pdf

Developed by the American Society of Health System Pharmacists and the ASHP Foundation

<http://www.ashpfoundation.org/MainMenuCategories/PracticeTools/MyMedicineList/MyMedicineListREFLogo.aspx>

*Developed by the National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation and
the American Pharmacists Association*

<http://www.pharmacist.com/Content/NavigationMenu3/Newsroom/AmericanPharmacistsMonth/MedicationList/PMR1.pdf>

Websites for Help with Medication Costs:

Partnership for Prescription Assistance: www.pparx.com

Together Rx Access: www.togetherrxaccess.org

Needy Meds: www.needymeds.org

NOTE: If you go to the Internet and search on “medication assistance” many sites will come up. Before you provide personal information on any site make sure you are comfortable with the legitimacy of the organization and its promises.

Appendix *Continued*



A Sampling of High Quality Consumer-focused Medication Safety Websites

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality is a division of the Department of Health and Human Services. This guide was developed by AHRQ and the National Council on Patient Information and Education.

<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/safemeds.htm>

The American Society of Health System Pharmacists developed this site. It contains a searchable database of information about drugs in very user-friendly language.

<http://www.safemedication.com>

This site contains a very consumer friendly tool kit. It was developed by the Center for Improving Medication Management & the National Council on Patient Information and Education.

www.learnaboutrxsafety.org

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices is the nation's only organization of doctors, nurses, and pharmacists focused on medication safety.

<http://www.consumermedsafety.org/>



A Glossary of Rx Terms Family Caregivers

Need to Know:

- Medication adherence
 - The extent to which patients take medications (both Rx and OTC) as instructed by their health care practitioners

- Adverse drug reaction
 - An *unintended and negative* reaction to a medication

- Medication error
 - A *preventable* event that can lead to patient harm or inappropriate use of a medication

- Medication reconciliation
 - The act of reviewing all of a patient's medications before ordering a new one to ensure that there are no overlaps or potential negative interactions

- Transition of Care
 - The movement of patients and or their medical information from one health care practitioner or setting to another as their condition and care needs change