Higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 places increased importance on social distancing for older adults (ages 60 and older). For many older adults, however, the changes stemming from social distancing measures are decreasing access to basic needs and services, disrupting daily routines, and causing isolation, stress and anxiety. All of these changes place older adults at higher risk of poisoning, both accidental and intentional.


**MEDICATION ERRORS**

Changes to daily routines, distractions, stress, and potentially decreased caregiver support may increase risk of medication errors, such as double dosing or taking the wrong medication.

- **Use a physical system to track when medications are taken**, such as a medication checklist, cell phone reminder app, or pill box.
- **Keep medications in their original containers or pill box**, never loose.
- **Store medications in separate locations or add labeling** to differentiate between the medications of different household members and pets.
- **To prevent double dosing, read medication labels closely** (especially dosing recommendations and ingredients).
- **Add labeling** (stickers, tape, permanent marker, etc.) to clearly differentiate between “look-a-like” products.
- **Call the Poison Helpline** with any questions about medications, dosing, or if a medication error occurs.

**CLEANERS & DISINFECTANTS**

Read and follow all directions and safety warnings.
- **Open windows and doors** to ensure adequate ventilation.
- **Wear gloves** when using products.
- **Do not mix cleaning products, and be careful cleaning with different products back-to-back. Mixing products can produce toxic gases.**
- **Store cleaners, household chemicals, and other potentially harmful products in their original containers.**
- **Label products** with Mr. Yuk stickers or other quickly identifiable labeling that shows a product may be unsafe.
- **Store products up high and out of reach of young children.**
- **Store products up high and out of reach of young children.**
- **Always supervise children when using hand sanitizer.** Hand sanitizer has high alcohol content, and can lead to alcohol poisoning in children if ingested. Call the Poison Helpline immediately if hand sanitizer is ingested.

**SELF-MEDICATING**

Some older adults may be helping with childcare, which can pose poison risks for both the older adult AND the child.

- **Take a break from the news.**
- **Set up regular communication with family members and friends.** With so much uncertainty, it can be helpful to establish periods of certainty, connection, and support.
- **Reconnect with organizations or social connections that were an important part of your life pre-COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these organizations are setting up ways to support their members virtually, over the phone, or through other means.**
- **If you or someone you know needs emotional support or is thinking of suicide, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255. For immediate help after self-harm, call 911.**

**GRANDPARENTS**

CALL THE POISON HELPLINE AT 1-800-222-1222.

The helpline is available 24/7/365, even during this pandemic. All calls are free and confidential.

Find additional COVID-19 resources and information at: https://www.wapc.org/programs/covid-19-resources-information/