

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

SAFE MEDICATION STORAGE

Organize and store medications in a designated area.

- Examples include a medicine cabinet or kitchen cupboard.
- Supplement this strategy with a medication checklist or other reminder system (see "Medication Management Strategies" section).

Store medications in their original containers or in a medication organizer.

- If storing medications in a medication organizer, use a medication list that contains descriptions of the medications (see "Medication Knowledge" section). Keep the medications' original containers for access to dosing and refill information.



Store medications separate from the medication of other household members and pets.

- Or, use colored prescription identification bands or colored pill organizers to differentiate between individuals.



Store medications separate from "look-a-like" non-pharmaceutical substances.

- Separate household cleaning products from medications and food items.
- Keep substances in their original containers.
- Put Mr. Yuk stickers on dangerous items.



Keep medications out of reach and out of sight.

- Consider using a lock box for medications, especially if there are small children in the household.
- Store medications in a medicine cabinet, kitchen cupboard, or other locations that are out of sight and out of reach.

Dispose of leftover medications.

- Find secure medicine take-back locations throughout Washington at TakeBackYourMeds.org.



Keep “high alert medications” (opioids, cannabis, sedatives, and antidepressants) locked up.



- Use a lock box for high alert medications.
- Keep high alert medications separate from those of other household members.
- Dispose of any leftover medications at secure medicine take-back locations. Find locations at TakeBackYourMeds.org.

RESOURCES

- TakeBackYourMeds.org
- KingCountySecureMedicineReturn.org
- Some Washington areas offer medication disposal mail-back envelopes
<https://med-project.org/>
- Opioid Medication & Pain: What You Need to Know
<http://wahealthalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Opioid-Medication-Pain-Fact-Sheet-revised.pdf>

MEDICATION KNOWLEDGE

Use a medication list.

- Use the “Developing a Medication List” form to create or revise an older adult’s medications list. At a minimum, include each medication’s name, amount (dose), when to take it, and any special instructions.
- Include over-the-counter medications and vitamins/herbal medicines/supplements.
- Bring the medication list to all healthcare appointments.
- Revise the medication list whenever medication plans change.

Provide a list of questions about medications for an older adult to review with their provider and/or pharmacist.

- See “10 Medication Questions to ask a Provider or Pharmacist” for questions ideas.

Encourage the older adult to bring an advocate to provider appointments and the pharmacy.

- Bringing a trusted friend, family member or caregiver provides a second set of ears. Their involvement may help an older adult better understand and remember medication plans by taking notes, asking questions, or aiding their recall of what was discussed.

| PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION LIST | Date Updated: | Name: |
|---|---------------|-------|
| Medication name & strength (Example: Simvastatin 10 mg) | | |
| What I take it for (Example: Cholesterol) | | |
| How much I take & at what time (Example: 1 pill at bedtime) | | |
| How do I take it? (Example: by mouth) | | |
| Special Instructions (Examples: take with food; avoid eating grapefruit) | | |
| What it looks like (Example: pink, oval, imprinted with H, 17) | | |
| Start & stop date (Example: June 1, 2017 - present) | | |
| Who prescribed it (Example: Dr. Smith) | | |
| Where I get it filled (Example: Safeway 2nd St) | | |

For additional copies, visit www.wapc.org. In case of a medication question or error, call the Washington Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. In case of emergency, always call 911.



RESOURCES

- National Institute on Aging: "Talking with Your Doctor: A Guide for Older People."
https://order.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2017-07/TWYD_508.pdf
- Medication Use Safety Training for Seniors
<http://www.bemedwise.org/docs/mustbooklet.pdf>

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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Use a medication checklist or other reminder system.

- See the “Medication Calendar” for an example of a paper version checklist.
- Pill organizers and medication dispensers may be used instead of a checklist. When using these options, make sure the older adult can easily interpret when they need to take a dose versus when they have already taken a dose.
- Use technology: set cell phone alarms, email reminders, and explore medication reminder cell phone applications.



Consolidate prescriptions to one pharmacy.



- Request a pharmacist review of medications to check for drug interactions, unnecessary medications, or other medication issues.
- Ask the pharmacy for services to manage medication refills.
- Some pharmacies may offer "bubble" or "blister" packaging, in which medications are packaged together by each day and/or time they need to be taken.

Explore options to reduce the cost of medications.

- Many drug manufacturers offer prescription assistance programs that provide free or low cost medications to people who can't afford their drugs - see BeMedWise resource below.
- Review Medicaid, Medicare, and Washington state programs that may cover costs or provide financial assistance. Explore these programs at the "State-Sponsored Programs" link below.
- Ask the older adult's pharmacist about other cost-cutting options, such as switching to generic medications or performing a medication review to eliminate unnecessary medications.

For older adults experiencing difficulty with prescription refills (accessing the pharmacy, remembering, etc.), consider mail-order prescriptions.

- Speak with the older adult's pharmacy for services they may offer regarding prescription refills.



RESOURCES

- BeMedWise Program: Medication Management for Caregivers
<http://bemedwise.org/medication-safety/elderly-care>
- BeMedWise Program: OTC medicines, vitamins, and supplements
<http://bemedwise.org/medication-safety/otc-medicines-vitamins-dietary-supplements>
- Mayo Clinic: Drugs and Supplements
<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/providers/digest/herb-drug-science>
- BeMedWise Program: Understanding Prescription Assistance Programs
<http://www.bemedwise.org/documents/paps.pdf>
- State-Sponsored Programs for Washington (medical care, healthcare insurance, prescription assistance, medical supplies, etc.)
<https://www.needymeds.org/state-programs/list/WA>