



Senior Series

*The Ohio
Department of
Aging*



For more information, visit the Ohio Department of Aging web site at: <http://www.state.oh.us/age/>
and Ohio State University Extension's "Aging in Ohio" web site at: <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~seniors/>

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Medication Misuse Among Older Adults

Although aging affects how medications are processed in our bodies, a major factor affecting how well a medication works is whether or not we take the medication as prescribed.

The consequences of mismanaging medications can be dangerous, and sometimes lethal. Despite the danger, however, many older adults do not take their medications correctly. There are a number of reasons why misuse occurs:

- Not understanding dosage instructions
- Not hearing dosage instructions correctly
- Not getting a prescription refilled
- Unpleasant taste of medication
- Having a confusing dosage schedule
- Not remembering to take medication

- Fear of becoming drug dependent
- Not being able to afford medication
- Limited ability to get to a pharmacy due to physical limitations or lack of transportation
- Impaired vision leading to difficulties with reading labels and distinguishing medications
- Not being able to open "childproof" medication containers

On the next page are some suggested solutions for avoiding 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 immediately.

Reference

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

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Problem	Possible Solutions
Impaired vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask pharmacist to use large print on label. ■ Use a magnifying glass to check labels before taking medication.
Impaired hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Write down your schedule clearly and use colors to differentiate times of day. Use daily/weekly medication dispensers. Coordinate the time to take medication with specific activities (i.e., meal time, time of favorite television program, when mail arrives, etc.).
Forgetfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use memory aids and daily or weekly medication dispensers. Place notes to yourself in places you will see them.
Limited mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use a pharmacy that will deliver prescriptions (cost may be higher).
Limited use of hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask pharmacist for easy-to-open medication caps.
Multiple medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have doctor evaluate medication regimen regularly. ■ Use a pharmacy that keeps a patient profile for customers.
Multiple doctors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Make sure each doctor knows all medications you are taking. ■ Purchase prescriptions at only one pharmacy.
Cost of medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Take advantage of discount programs. ■ Call local pharmacies and compare prices. ■ Ask doctor or pharmacist whether a generic drug 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 drug company.

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