

eFit eLearning Course Handout



Managing Medications

- How does aging impact medication used?
- What should a person know about medications?
- How can medications be managed by older adults?
- How do medications interact with over-the-counter medicine, food, and alcohol?

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What are Medications?

- Medication, often referred to as drugs, can be:
 - **prescription medication** that require a health care provider to order
 - **over-the-counter pills, liquids, or creams.** Bought without a prescription, such as pills for headaches, chew tablets for heartburn, herbal remedies
 - **vitamins, eye drops, or dietary supplements**
- Tell health care providers about ALL medications being taken, including those prescribed by other health providers or even drugs used every now and then.

[National Institute on Aging, 2019](#)

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Medication and Aging

- Medications help treat and manage health conditions or reduce the risk of future disease and illness.
 - People experience more diseases and illnesses as they age, often resulting in older adults taking many medications.
- Changes in the body impact the way older adults process medication.
- It is important to understand:
 - why medications are prescribed
 - side effects
 - that questions can be asked in order to understand medications

Healthinaging.org, n.d.

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Understanding Medication



Understand the following about all medication being taken:

- the name written on the pharmacy label (not “the little blue water pill”)
- what the medication is supposed to help with
- how to take the medication
- common side effects
- what to do if problems arise
- what to do if a dose is missed

[National Institute on Aging](https://www.nia.nih.gov), 2019

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Ask Questions

- Keep a written list of questions and add to it – it is easy to forget to ask questions in the moment.
- Ask a health care provider:
 - how long does it take for the medication to work?
 - does this new medication affect others being taken?
 - is it safe to drive?
 - what does it mean if the order is “as needed”?
 - will a refill be needed?
- If a health care provider stops medications, ask them to explain why and to answer any questions.

[National Institute on Aging, 2019; PSI n.d.](#)

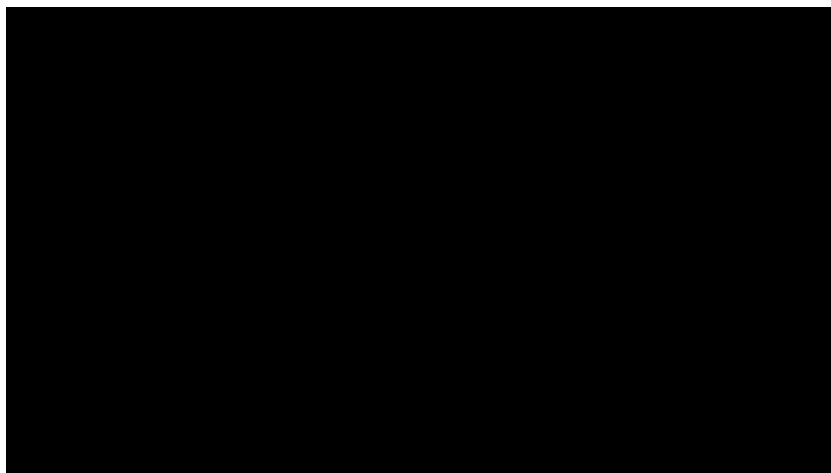
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Understanding Drug Labels



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Medication Safety

- Always take medications exactly as prescribed by the healthcare provider – follow instructions carefully.
- Read the label on the bottle.
- Ask a health care provider before starting over-the-counter medications or other non-prescription products.
- Keep prescriptions filled.
- Finish medications as prescribed; don't stop taking a medication just because symptoms have gone away.
- Keep an up to date list of all prescribed medications, over-the-counter medications and all others easily accessible.

Tips for Medication Use

If you or your loved one...

- Has difficulty reading or understanding directions on labels...
 - ...ask for blister packages or use pill organizers.
- Has difficulty opening pill containers...
 - ...ask for easy to open packaging.
- Does not have enough information to understand how to take the medication...
 - ...ask the pharmacist for more information.

Tips for Medication Use

If you or your loved one...

- Has difficulty remembering to take medications as directed...
 - ...use a blister pack or pill box, daily list of medications, or calendar to keep track of medications.
 - ...create routines around taking medications.
- Has difficulty swallowing pills...
 - ...talk to the pharmacist about alternative forms of the medication.

Healthinaging.org, n.d.

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Over-the-Counter-Medications

- Over-the-counter medications are purchased at the pharmacy, grocery store, or other retail locations without a prescription.
- Common examples of over-the-counter medications you may have purchased and used include:
 - Advil (ibuprofen)
 - Benadryl (diphenhydramine)
 - TUMS (calcium carbonate)
- Some over-the-counter medications can cause harm, especially in combination with prescription medications.
- Talk to the pharmacist about what you plan to take.

Healthinaging.org, n.d.

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Medication and Food



Ruscin & Linnebur, 2018

- Some foods can affect medications and change the way they work.
 - For example, grapefruit and grapefruit juice are known to interact with many medications.
- Talk to a health care provider about diet when discussing medications.

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Medication and Alcohol



- Alcohol affects how medication works.
- Alcohol should be avoided when taking medications prescribed for sleep, pain, anxiety, or depression.
- Be honest with health care providers about how much alcohol is consumed.

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Think About... Your Medications

How much do you know about the medications you take? Do you know...

- the name written on the pharmacy label?
- what the medication is supposed to help with?
- how to take the medication?
- common side effects?
- what to do if problems arise?
- what to do if a dose is missed?

Talk to a health care provider about any questions you may have



You Have Completed the Managing Medications eLearning Course!

For more information on this and other topics, please visit our [eFit Resources for Individuals & Caregivers on www.sagelink.ca](http://www.sagelink.ca).

We appreciate your feedback. Please contact info@sagelink.ca if you have suggestions, comments or have any questions.

References

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