

# Polypharmacy:

Are you overwhelmed with your medications?

As you get older, you might need more medications to stay healthy, but taking a lot of medications can be tricky and even dangerous if you do not follow safety rules. Some call it polypharmacy, which means taking five or more medications. Here are some ways to help you manage your medications and avoid problems:



## **Keep a list of all of your medications**

Before you take over-the-counter medicines, talk to your doctor or Pharmacist. List all medications you are taking, including the name of the medication, the amount you take, how often and why you take it. Include those prescribed by your doctor and over-the-counter products such as cough medicine, vitamins, eyedrops and herbal medicines.



## **Follow the instructions on how to take your medications correctly**

- Do not skip doses. Do not stop taking medication without consulting your doctor.
- If you have trouble remembering when to take your medications, use a pill organizer, a reminder app or an alarm clock.
- Do not take medication prescribed to someone else.
- Take your medication as prescribed by your doctor. If it says it is to be taken three times a day, take it as directed. Do not adjust.
- If possible, try to fill all your medications at the same pharmacy.
- Have your pharmacist complete an annual Complete Medication Review (CMR), which Medicare usually covers. Pharmacists often have more information about potential side effects.
- When you pick up your medications, review the pills in the bottle to ensure they are all the same color and shape. Sometimes pharmacies change manufacturers and your pills may look different. It is important to check with your pharmacist if you identify any changes in your medications.



## **Prepare for your medical appointments by writing down any questions or concerns about your medications.**

- Ask a family member or friend (Health Buddy) to go with you to the appointment and give them a list of questions you plan to ask the doctor to make sure you don't miss anything.
- Ask about the benefits and risks of a medication.
- Ask about possible side effects and interactions with other drugs or food.
- Ask about the cost and coverage of medication, or use of generic medications.



## Ask your doctor for written information or educational materials

Review your medications regularly with your doctor or pharmacist. Taking your medicine the right way is very important to stay healthy. This means taking the correct amount when you're supposed to, knowing what side effects it might have and talking to your doctor often. When you take your medicine correctly, you can feel better, stay out of the hospital and enjoy life more. It's one of the best ways to take care of your health.



## Utilize tools to streamline medication management. Locate your App Store or Google Play on your cell phone and search for the following:

- **Medisafe** – pill and med reminder; also has a place to keep a diary, list of appointments and doctors
- **MyMedSchedule** – allows users to create personalized medication schedules and reminders
- **RXmindMe** – helps users stay on track with their prescriptions
- **Pill Reminder** – pill reminder app



## Store your medications in a safe and secure place

- Store away from heat, light, moisture and children.
- Do not use expired medications.
- Do not take medications that have changed color, smell or texture.
- Dispose of unused or unwanted medications properly by returning them to a pharmacy or a drug take-back program. Don't flush them down the toilet or throw them in the trash.



## Resources

[Tips for Taking Blood Pressure Medicines As Directed \(English video\) | CDC](#)



[Tips for Taking Blood Pressure Medicines As Directed \(Spanish video\) | CDC](#)



[Medicines and You: A Guide for Older Adults | FDA](#)

