

## Medication Management for Fall Prevention

### Problems to Watch for When You Take Medicine

Some of the side effects of medications may contribute to a fall, and the more medications you take, the greater the risk of falling. Use these tips to help keep you safe.

Some possible side effects of medications are:

- |                                       |                                            |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| ▪ Headaches                           | ▪ Swollen ankles                           |
| ▪ Loss of appetite or not eating well | ▪ Flushed skin                             |
| ▪ Nausea or vomiting                  | ▪ Feeling weak, faint or dizzy             |
| ▪ Vision changes                      | ▪ Having trouble with your bowel movements |
| ▪ Drowsiness                          | ▪ Having muscle cramps                     |
| ▪ Shakiness or unsteadiness           |                                            |
| ▪ Feeling confused                    |                                            |

Make sure to share these side effects during your next doctor visit, because your health care provider might be able to:

- Change your dose
- Change the medicine you use, or
- Tell you to stop taking the medication

### Guidelines for Safe Use of Medications

Talk to your health care provider about all the medicines you use. You can also ask your pharmacist about what is safe and healthy.

DO...	DO NOT...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy. That way, your pharmacist can watch for drug allergies and drugs that don't work well together</li> <li>▪ Keep a list of all medications you take, including over the counter drugs and herbal remedies</li> <li>▪ Store prescriptions away from children</li> <li>▪ Tell your doctor about known allergies</li> <li>▪ Follow medication and dosage instructions closely</li> <li>▪ Shake all liquid medications</li> <li>▪ Follow special dietary advice or instructions</li> <li>▪ Tell your doctor about any drugs prescribed for you by other doctors</li> <li>▪ Keep a written record of all drugs to which you are allergic</li> <li>▪ Attend all doctor visits while taking prescription drugs</li> <li>▪ Ask your doctor or pharmacist when you have questions about your medication</li> <li>▪ Check the expiration date of your medications</li> <li>▪ Always take pills with a full glass of water</li> <li>▪ Use pill boxes to keep track of doses</li> <li>▪ Keep a list of your medications in the refrigerator and in your glove compartment of the car. In case of emergency, paramedics know to look in those two places.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change the dosage or timing of any drug without your doctor's advice</li> <li>▪ Share or take any one else's drugs</li> <li>▪ Continue to take a medication which is causing extreme side effects</li> <li>▪ Take any medication in the dark</li> <li>▪ Drive or operate machinery if drowsy from medication</li> <li>▪ Drink alcohol with most drugs</li> <li>▪ Keep out-of-date prescriptions, or take medications that have expired</li> <li>▪ Remove drugs from labeled bottles</li> </ul>

## Medicines You Get on Your Own

A medicine strong enough to help you is also strong enough to harm you if it is not used wisely. Check with your health care provider before you use:

- Medicine you can buy without a prescription.
- Home remedies, herbs, or vitamins.
- Prescription medicine.

It's important to ask because:

- Some medicines do not work well together.
- The dose of one drug may be too high when taken with another drug.
- Herbs and nonprescription medicines may not be safe for you. Just because something says "all natural" does not make it safe.
- A medical problem could be caused by the medicines you use.
- Some non-prescription medications may be similar to other medications you are currently taking.

## Tips for Doctor Visits

In order to get the best health care possible, it is important to communicate effectively with your health care providers. Here are some tips for making the most of your doctor visits:

- Take someone else with you when you see the doctor to take notes and ask questions that you might forget.
- Bring a list of the medications you take, or bring all your medications with you in a bag and ask your doctor to review them with you. Periodically ask your doctor if you can lower dosages, or re-evaluate continuation of certain drugs.
- Keep an experience log or journal. Record any new feelings or side effects you might be having—with or without new medications—and share it with your doctor.
- Tell your health care provider if you:
  1. Are having problems with the way your medicine makes you feel.
  2. Are not sure of what to do if you miss a dose.
  3. Plan to stop taking a medicine.
  4. Take it differently from the way the label tells you to.
  5. Cannot afford to take your medicine the way it was prescribed.

## QUESTIONS FOR MY DOCTOR:

1. Please check my current medications list. Will this new medicine interact with other medicines I use?
2. What does this medicine do and how should I use it?
3. Are any side effects likely? Should I expect to feel any different while taking this medicine?
4. When should the medicine be reviewed or stopped?
5. May I increase or decrease the dose? If so, under what circumstances?
6. May I ever change dosage times, or skip days? If so, under what circumstances?

## QUESTIONS FOR MY PHARMACIST:

1. Please check my current medications list on reverse. Will this new medicine interact with other medicines I use?
2. Are any side effects likely? Should I expect to feel any different while taking this medicine?
3. Is a Physician's Insert available for this drug? (If so, ask for and hold on to this reference in case any uncommon side effects emerge.)
4. What can I do to reduce the chance of any side effects?
5. What should I do if I miss a dose?
6. What food, drink, activity or storage might affect how well this medicine works?

## CURRENT MEDICATIONS LIST

**\*Be sure to include over the counter medications and herbal remedies\***

<b>Medication</b>	<b>Dosage</b>	<b>Number of Pills per dose</b>	<b>Reason for Taking</b>	<b>When to Take</b>	<b>Tape pill here or add comments</b>

\* Last 2 pages adapted from THE CAREGIVERS HANDBOOK, courtesy of Robert S. Stall, M.D. and provided by the Senior Injury Prevention Project of Alameda County