



## Tips for Medication Safety

As seniors age, the likelihood that they will need some form of medication increases. In fact, according to a study by [AARP](#) about prescription drug use among older Americans, it has been found that those 64 years and older take, on average, more than four different types of prescription drugs per day. Because of the number of medications that seniors take, it's important to ensure they are managing their medications safely and taking them correctly in order to ensure they get the maximum benefit out of them.

While there are a number of seniors who take their medications safely and exactly as prescribed, some may not even know they are not taking their medications correctly or realize they are putting themselves at risk for adverse reactions. Because bodies change naturally as seniors age, it's even more important to be safe and well-educated about your medications.

The [National Institute of Health \(NIH\)](#) and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) suggest the following ways to protect yourself or a loved one from the dangers of not managing medications safely.

- **Understand the medication.** According to the NIH, when a new medicine is prescribed, it's important to learn as much about it as possible. This includes the name of the medicine, what its generic form is called, exactly what it is for and why this particular medication was prescribed.
- **Learn what the side effects are.** Before starting a new medicine, talk to your doctor about side effects that could be possible with this medication. While many side effects are not serious and go away, according to the FDA, it's still important to know what to expect. They suggest making a list of side effects and symptoms you are feeling so that it can be managed effectively.
- **Find out how this drug will react with others.** It's important to let your doctor know exactly what medications you are taking and in what dose. This is especially important if you have more than one doctor or pharmacist as they may not be up to date with what you or a loved one are taking. Also keep in mind that while many people think they only need to tell their doctor about prescribed medications, they should also inform them of any over-the-counter medications and supplements, as well, because when combined with other drugs, some medications may not be safe to use.
- **Medications can also interact with food.** According to the FDA, it's also important to talk to your doctor about your eating habits. If you or a loved one are on a special diet, it's important your doctor knows, as it could be possible for some foods to make the medicine less safe. Talk to your doctor, as well, about if you can drink alcohol, because many medications do not mix safely with alcohol. Also talk about how much coffee or tea you drink. Sometimes, it's crucial to take medicines with water or food. Be sure to verify this before taking it.

*Inspiring Wellness!*



- **Be sure to take the medication correctly.** In order to ensure you or a loved one are taking medicines safely, be sure to ask your doctor if it needs to be taken at a certain time and what dose you should take. If you or a loved one has trouble swallowing pills, be sure to talk to a doctor or pharmacist about whether or not it can be crushed or if it comes in liquid form. The NIH states you should not break, crush or chew tablets without knowing this, first.
- **Do not just stop taking medications.** If you or a loved one are beginning to feel better, do not stop taking the medication and call the doctor for guidance. Some medications need to be weaned off slowly or they may cause safety issues if stopped abruptly. If you know you will be busy or will be going away and may run out of medicine, try to get them refilled as early as possible so that you do not run out. Keep in mind, however, that some medicines expire so it's important to properly discard any medicines that are out of date.
- **If you can't afford a medication, talk to your doctor.** According to AARP, half of those ages 50 and stop refilling prescriptions for a number of reasons, however most stop because of the cost of the drug. If you or a loved one are unable to afford a medication, talk to your doctor about options such as generic forms or assistance to defray the costs of the medication. For more assistance, visit this [website](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, talk to your doctor. If you or a loved one have taken a medicine and may have accidentally overdosed, call the Poison Help Center at **1-800-222-1222**.

### **Experience Lifestyle, Care, Community and Tradition at Lions Gate.**

Lions Gate, located in Voorhees, NJ, offers a continuum of lifestyle and care options rooted in Jewish traditions and values. Whether you are in need of [Independent Living](#), [Assisted Living](#), [Memory Care](#), [Skilled Nursing](#) or [Rehabilitation Services](#), Lions Gate has you covered.

Our mission at Lions Gate is to enrich the lives of those we serve through quality and compassionate care consistent with our heritage and values. We strive to provide [programs and services](#) that inspire wellness as well as social, cultural and spiritual independence.

**To learn more about Lions Gate's Unparalleled Lifestyle and Community Services, [contact us](#) today!**

*Inspiring Wellness!*