

## **MEDICATION TIPS FOR SAFETY'S SAKE**

1. Never take someone else's medication.
2. Never give medications to another person.
3. Never keep expired or discontinued medications. Dispose of them properly. They can be placed in bags of used coffee grounds or kitty litter and tossed in the household trash. Be sure they are removed from the original containers.
4. Never mix more than one medication in a container.
5. Always keep medications in their original container at home and when traveling.
6. Never keep medications at the bedside (except specific medications for breathing or chest pain) because double doses might be taken accidentally.
7. Follow your medication regimen according to the doctor's directions for the dose, frequency, method of taking, and so forth.
8. Always consult your doctor or pharmacist about any directions not clearly understood rather than guess.
9. Consider using one pharmacy so that the pharmacist can help you keep track of your medications and screen for potential drug interactions.
10. Always store medications according to your pharmacist's directions.
11. Never crush, chew or break capsules or tablets unless your pharmacist or doctor tells you it is OK. Some medications will not work unless they are swallowed whole. If you cannot swallow, ask the pharmacist if there are other dosage forms that you could use.
12. Try to avoid alcoholic beverages when taking medications. When in doubt, ask your pharmacist or doctor.
13. In most cases, don't expect your medication to make you feel better immediately. Give it time to work.
14. Never stop a medication just because you feel better, unless instructed by your doctor.

15. If you have missed a dose of your medication, don't try to catch up by doubling your next dose (unless instructed by your doctor).
16. Always keep medications out of the reach of children, especially if you don't have child-resistant caps on the bottles. (And remember, they are only child-resistant, not child-proof.)
17. Keep a record of side effects or allergic reactions you have had to medications. Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you think you are experiencing what you think may be a side effect.
18. Always read the label – don't trust your memory.
19. Make sure that each of your doctors has a complete list of all of your medications including prescription, over-the-counter, vitamins, herbs and nutritional supplements.
20. Always bring all your current medications (or at least an updated list) with you when you visit any doctor, dentist or are admitted to the hospital.
21. Don't take medications as a substitute for other ways to feel good. Friends, good food and regular exercise can help you feel better.
22. And remember – ASK QUESTIONS!!!

Important websites for other good information for seniors:

<http://www.niapublications.org/agepages/medicine.asp>

<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/category/healthyaging.html>

<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/>

<http://www.mustforseniors.org/index.jsp>

### **National Institute on Aging**

1-800-222-2225

[www.nih.gov/nia](http://www.nih.gov/nia)

*"Medicines: Use Them Wisely"*

This "Age Page" brochure provides general information for older adults on medicines and how to properly manage medicines.

*"Talking with Your Doctor: A Guide for Older People"*

This brochure provides helpful hints and practical steps older people can take to communicate more effectively with their doctors. Includes tips on preparing for a doctor's appointment such as questions to ask about medications.