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Talk About Prescriptions Month



Take Your Medications Safely and Wisely

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For many older adults, taking medications is a part of the everyday routine. On average an older adult takes four prescription and 2 over-the-counter medications each day. It is not uncommon for some people to take 10 different medications daily. Even though people over 65 make up only 13% of the population, they account for 34% of prescription and 30% of over-the-counter medication use.

Older adults are at an increased risk of harmful medication side effects for a number of reasons:

- Changes to how the body reacts to medication
- Use of many medications and potentially dangerous interactions between those medications
- Having several chronic conditions
- Having more than one prescribing physician
- Going to more than one pharmacy
- Cognitive disorders that make understanding the medication directions difficult.

There are several things a person can do to be a successful medication manager:

- **Know your medications** – Know the names, understand how to take them, and learn about potential side effects.
- **Tell all health providers and pharmacists everything you take** – Include prescription and over-the-counter medications, supplements and vitamins. Take a current list with you every time you visit a healthcare provider.
- **Use only one pharmacy** – Don't be afraid to ask your pharmacist questions about a medication.
- **Store medications in one location away from heat, direct sunlight or humidity.**
- **Read all labels and instructions** – Do this before starting a new medication.
- **Take the medication according to the instructions and don't stop until told by your healthcare provider** – If you experience side effects, contact your doctor and the medication may be adjusted.

The Orange County Office on Aging can provide two tools to make medication management easier: a Senior Health Guide and a collapsible cup. Call the Office on Aging at **1-800-510-2020** or **1-714-567-7500** and ask the Information Specialist to send you either of these items. The Office on Aging Information and Assistance Specialists also have information on all programs and services for older adults in Orange County, including in-home assistance, transportation, caregiver support, counseling and meal programs.