



UNDERSTANDING  
**How to Manage  
Your Medications**

——— AND ———

**Getting the Most Out of  
Visits With Your Doctor**  
FOR OLDER ADULTS

# CHAPTER 1: MEDICATION MANAGEMENT IN OLDER ADULTS

Older adults face particular challenges in medication management. On average, older adults take at least four prescription drugs and two over the counter (OTC) medications at once. Because older adults are more likely to be taking multiple medications than other age groups, they are more susceptible to drug interactions and more liable to make a mistake with their medications.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGING YOUR MEDICATIONS PROPERLY:



### Provide your doctors with a complete list of your current medications.

This is particularly important if you have several doctors who have prescribed prescription or OTC medications. Make sure all of your doctors know what the others are prescribing, and ask one doctor such as your primary care provider to coordinate your medications.



### Keep track of side effects, especially if you've recently changed medications.

New symptoms may not be from aging. They could be from the medications you're taking. Pay special attention to new symptoms when starting, stopping or changing dosage of your medications.



### Learn about the medications you're taking.

Find out as much as you can by asking questions and reading about the medications you take, regardless if it's prescription or OTC medication. Knowing about the medications you take will help you understand how it works, alert you to potential side effects and more.



### Follow directions.

Every time you take your medication, read the label to prevent mistakes and be sure you understand the medication timing and dosage prescribed. Your physician and pharmacist are both available to answer questions regarding medication management.



### Don't forget to take your medicines as prescribed.

Use a memory aid to help you. There are many options available. Examples include a calendar, pillbox, or your own system, like marking each dose taken directly on the bottle.

### FAQ

Before you leave your doctor's office with a new prescription, it is important that you understand how to take the drug properly. Your pharmacy can also provide valuable information about how to take your medicines and how to manage side effects.

### ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BEFORE TAKING A NEW MEDICATION:

- What is the name of this drug, and what does it do?
- Is this a generic or a brand name product?
- When and how should I take this?
- What should I do if I forget a dose?
- What side effects should I expect?
- How long will I be on this drug?
- How should I store this drug?

Certain types of drugs can cause serious adverse health events. If you are taking a drug in any of the categories below, it is particularly important to follow medication instructions and monitor their use and effectiveness with your doctor regularly.

### COMMON DRUGS THAT REQUIRE FREQUENT MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE ARE:



**Heart medications**



**Diabetes medications**



**Blood thinners**



**Seizure medications**

## CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING CARE PLANS



Sometimes doctors seem too hurried to answer questions or we are too embarrassed to ask questions if we don't understand their instructions. When you don't remember instructions or have questions about your follow-up care, it is always best to ask.



### ASK A NURSE, DOCTOR OR PHARMACIST THESE QUESTIONS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND YOUR HEALTH.

**1** WHAT IS MY PRIMARY ISSUE?

**2** WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE?

**3** WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

#### WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO ASK QUESTIONS?

- When you see your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.
- If you forget, you can always call to review or clarify this information with your doctor's office or pharmacy.

#### WHAT IF I ASK AND STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND?

- Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you still don't understand the information or instructions they have provided to you.
- Try saying, "I still don't understand and this is new to me. Can you please try to explain it to me again?"

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### USE THE TIPS BELOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR APPOINTMENTS AND TO MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TO BEST CARE FOR YOUR HEALTH.

#### PREPARE A LIST OF CONCERNS TO TAKE WITH YOU.



- If you have more than a few items to discuss, rank them in order of importance and bring up the most pressing issues first.

#### BRING A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND TO APPOINTMENTS.



- This person can remind you of what you planned to discuss with the doctor. They can take notes for you and help you remember what the doctor said.

#### TELL THE DOCTOR WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE YOUR LAST VISIT.



- If you have been treated in the emergency room or by a specialist, tell the doctor. Be sure to mention any changes in your appetite, weight, sleeping patterns, or energy level.

#### TAKE INFORMATION WITH YOU.



- It is helpful to bring your medications, insurance information, your other doctors' contact information and your medical records, if the doctor doesn't already have them.

#### REQUEST/BRING AN INTERPRETER IF YOU NEED ONE.



- If you and your doctor don't speak the same language, an interpreter will be beneficial in understanding your health. This could also be the person you bring to take notes.

#### MAKE SURE YOU CAN SEE AND HEAR AS WELL AS POSSIBLE.



- Many older people use glasses and/or hearing aids. Be sure to utilize those. Let the doctor and staff know if you are struggling to see or hear so that your needs are accommodated.

# CHAPTER 3: RESOURCES AND SERVICES



Finding the right resources for older adults and their caregivers can be time-consuming and overwhelming. The resources below are helpful in finding referrals and other useful information.



**THE SIXTY PLUS SERVICES AGING HELPLINE AT PIEDMONT** can clarify what services are needed and where to go. This free service that helps older adults, family members and friends, is staffed by trained geriatric healthcare professionals. Callers requiring more extensive assistance may be referred to a licensed clinical social worker.

Piedmont Atlanta and Newton Aging Helpline.....	404.605.3867
Piedmont Fayette Aging Helpline.....	770.719.7214
Piedmont Henry Aging Helpline.....	678.604.5999
Piedmont Mountainside Aging Helpline.....	706.299.5059
Piedmont Newnan Aging Helpline.....	770.400.2010



[www.piedmont.org/sixty-plus](http://www.piedmont.org/sixty-plus)



Most drug manufacturers have **PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE** programs for those needing help to afford their medications. You can find these programs through websites like [www.needymeds.com](http://www.needymeds.com) or ask your doctor.



Also many chain stores like **WALMART, TARGET, PUBLIX AND KROGER** offer generic prescription assistance to provide free or low-cost medications to the community. Websites such as [www.goodrx.com](http://www.goodrx.com) will help you search for the best prices on specific medications at pharmacies in your area.



**YOUR LOCAL REGIONAL COMMISSION'S AREA AGENCY ON AGING** provides services to address the needs of older adults and their caregivers including information and referral services for case management, transportation, home-delivered meals, senior centers, legal services and more.

To find your local area agency on aging, visit <http://aging.dhs.georgia.gov/>.

**The Atlanta Regional Commission's 'AgeWise Connection'**.....404.463.3333  
Serves Fulton, Fayette, Henry and surrounding counties.  
[www.atlantaregional.com](http://www.atlantaregional.com) • [www.agewiseconnection.com](http://www.agewiseconnection.com)

**The Three Rivers Regional Commission**.....678.552.2838  
Serves Coweta and surrounding counties.  
[www.threeriversrc.org](http://www.threeriversrc.org)

**The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission**.....1.800.759.2963  
Serves Pickens and surrounding counties.  
[www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org)

**The Northeast Regional Commission**.....706.583.2546  
Serves Newton and surrounding counties.  
[www.negrc.org](http://www.negrc.org)

