

MANAGING MEDICATIONS

Need to Knows provide older adults and their families with important information to enhance their hospital or nursing home stays. Communication and teamwork are important aspects of high-quality healthcare. The individual, family, and caregivers are vital members of the team.

Why is it important?

Your healthcare provider is your partner in learning about your medications and how to manage them. Medications should be taken as prescribed and may affect you differently as you get older and/or develop more health conditions. Dosages or frequency of taking medications may need to change over time. Medications include those prescribed by a healthcare provider, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, supplements, laxatives, and herbal remedies.

What you and your family can do:

Ask your healthcare provider about the medications you are currently taking, the purpose of each, the benefits, and the possible side effects.

Talk to your provider or nurse immediately if side effects occur.

If recently discharged from a care organization, ask your healthcare provider to review all medications from before and after your stay.

Ask how new medications work with your existing medications.

Include a family member or caregiver in conversations about your medications.

Write information or instructions in a journal/or other safe place.

In addition:

Ask for a written schedule of medications.

Use one pharmacy that is close to home for all prescriptions and review medications with a pharmacist if you have any questions.

If you are not able to pick up your medications, ask for delivery details/assistance.

Use pill organizers, calendars, and alarms to help you manage your medications.

Read medication labels and follow directions exactly.

Do not take more or less of a medication than is prescribed.

Do not stop medications until told to do so.

Know which drugs work better with or without food.

Make sure medications listed on your discharge summary match those you have at home. If different, make sure you understand why.

Dispose of any medications discontinued during a hospital or nursing home stay.

Talk with the pharmacist if you are unable to obtain your prescription immediately.

